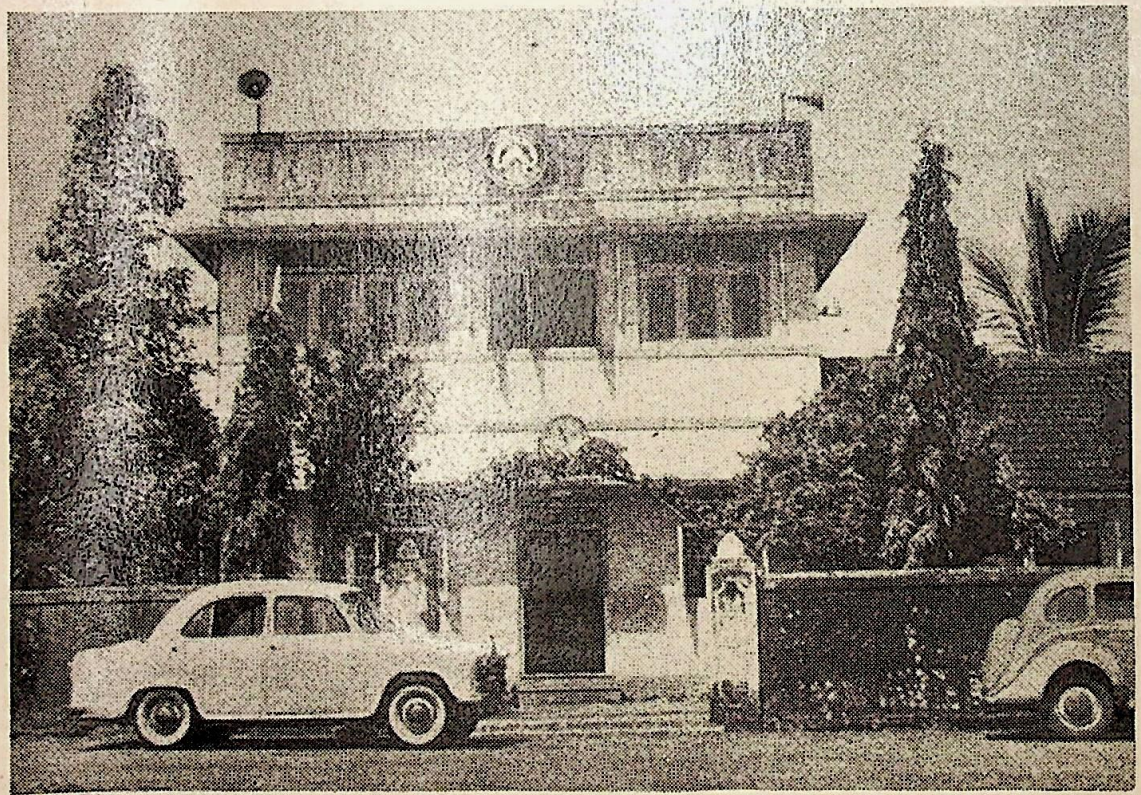


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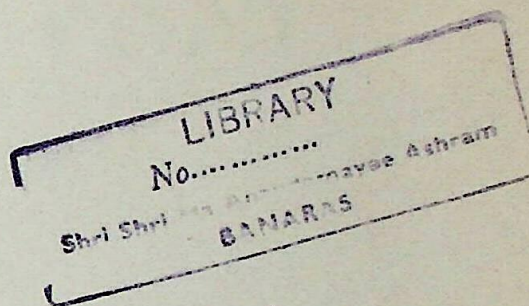
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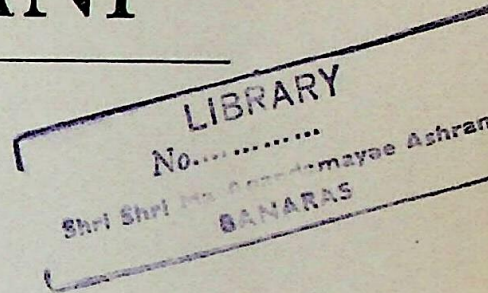
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गुरुवाणी



गुरुवाणी दिव्यवाणी, गुरुवाणी तारकवाणी,
गुरुवाणी अमृतवाणी, अमरजीवन पाय हैं ।

स्वामी मुक्तानंद



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Ganeshpuri — Thana

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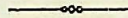
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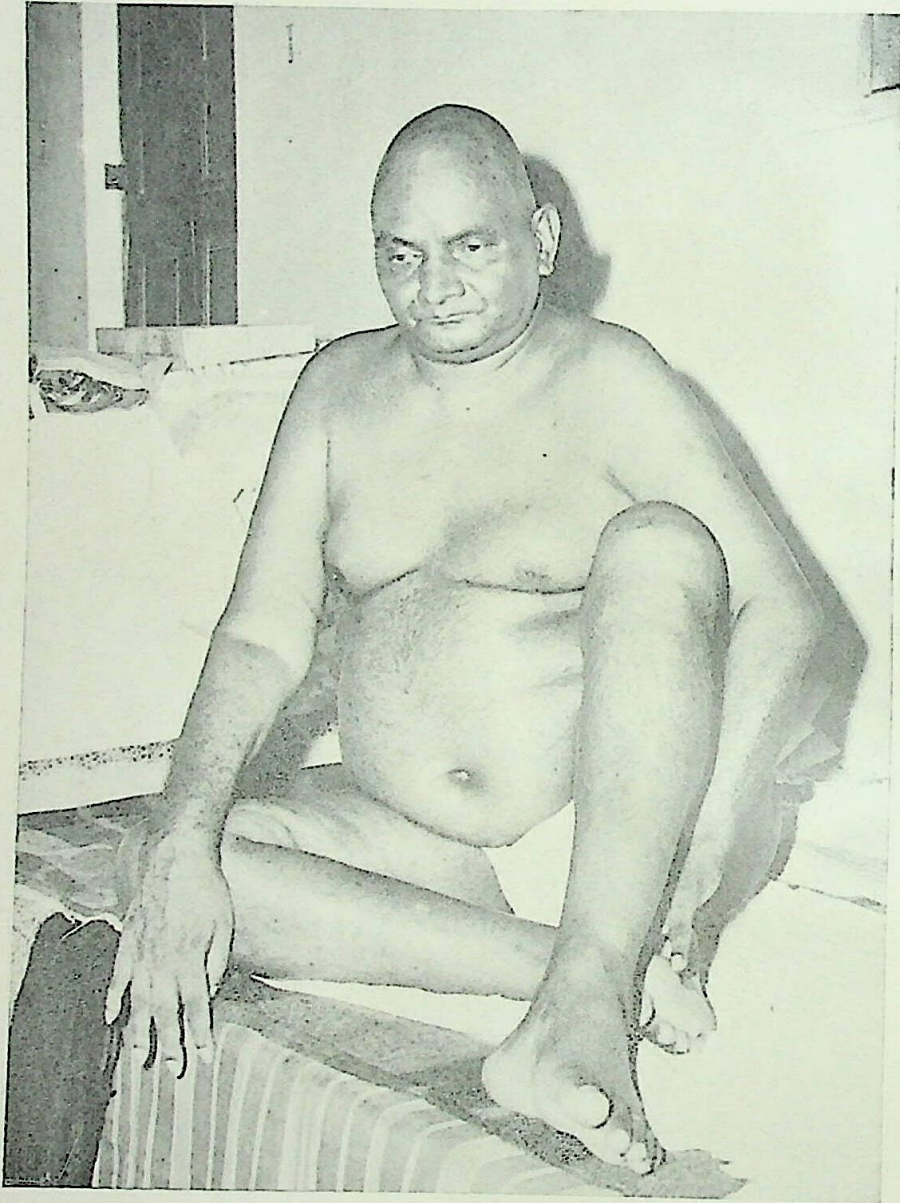
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 Chakrapani Ullal



BHAGWAN SRI NITYANANDA

गुरुध्यान

श्री गुरुध्यानसे चित्त पवित्र
गुरुप्रेमसे उच्च चरित्र,
श्री गुरुदेव है सभीके मित्र
गुरुपूजाके फल है विचित्र ।

गुरुज्ञान करे तमका नाश
गुरुध्यानसे जरा-मरण विनाश,
गुरु करता ज्ञानका प्रकाश
मुक्तानंद गुरुप्रेम उल्लास ॥ १ ॥

श्री गुरुदेव सबका आधार
गुरुदेव हैं जीवन का सार,
श्री गुरु करे सबका उद्धार
गुरुमार्ग ही शुद्ध है आचार ।

गुरु हरता अज्ञान-अन्धेरा
गुरुदृष्टि सर्व ब्रह्मपसारा,
गुरु नित्य देता समता शांति
मुक्तानंद गुरुचरण विश्रान्ति ॥ २ ॥

अवधूत चरणों में वन्दना

जो गुरुओं का भी गुरुदेव है परम निरंजन,
जिसका तेजोमय कृष्णवर्ण जगमग-नीलम तन ।
सर्वत्र व्याप कर भी जिसका गणेशपुरी वास है,
उस परमावधूत नित्यानन्द को मम नमस्कार है ॥

जो वर्ण, जाति, आश्रम से परे शुद्ध रूप है,
जिसका सहजाचार विधिविहित कर्म अनूप है ।
जो स्वयं आप में परिपूरण तत्त अपार है,
उस परमावधूत नित्यानन्द चरणों में नमस्कार है ॥

जिसके सहजाचरण में है कल्याण जगत का,
जिसका कोई स्वार्थ नहीं, जो स्वार्थ सभी का ।
योगीका योगीश्वर ज्ञानी का ज्ञानीश्वर है
उस गणेशपुरीवासी नित्यानन्द को नमस्कार है ॥

स्थूल, सूक्ष्म, महाकारण से परे तीर हो,
अधो-ऊर्ध्व विरहित सर्वत्र तुम नित्यपूर्ण हो ।
त्रयावस्था पंच लोक से परम पार हो,
गणेशपुरीवासी नित्यानन्द को नमस्कार हो ॥

जिसके दक्षिण में वज्रेश्वरी माता हैं वसती,
उत्तर में जिसके मंदागिनी पर्वत है महती ।
जहाँ पूरव से वह आयी नदी पश्चिम में वहती,
उस उष्णतीर्थवासी नित्यानन्द को नमस्कार है ॥

जिसके दर्शन से ही पापों का पूर्ण नाश हो,
जिसके दर्शन से हृदय पूर्ण तृप्त, पूर्ण आश हो ।
है पास नहीं कुछ, फिर भी जिसका सर्वत्र राज है,
उस परमावधूत नित्यानन्द को मम नमस्कार है ॥

जो शुद्धों का भी शुद्ध अति पूर्ण परमानन्द है,
जो जीवन्मुक्तों को प्राप्त चिद् धन आनन्द है ।
मुक्तानन्द का ध्येय जो श्री गुरु सद् चिदात्मन् है,
उस गणेशपुरीवासी नित्यानन्द को मम नमस्कार है ॥

जिससे जुडकर जन पाता न पीर न कोई कष्ट है,
जिससे नेह करने से होता आत्मा अति तृप्त है ।
जिसके स्मरण से जीव पाये, पद मुक्तानन्द है,
वे ही देव गणेशपुरी के श्री नित्यानन्द है ॥

नित्यानन्द महान

नित्यानन्द महान, जय जय जय सत्गुरु भगवान ॥ ध्रुव०

तुम्हरी महिमा केहि विधि गावें
मन वाणी तहाँ पहुँच न पावें
हम हैं निरज्ञान ॥ जय...

शान्त सौम्य हे घट घट वासी
दयानिधे परिपूर्ण प्रकाशी
चरण-कमल का ध्यान ॥ जय...

केहि विधि रूप निहारें तेरा
हृदय विच अज्ञान अंधेरा
दो निर्मल मोहे ज्ञान ॥ जय...

शरण तिहारी जो कोई आवे
परिपूर्ण परमानन्द पावे
तुरतहि हो कल्याण ॥ जय...

हे दुःखभंजन अलखनिरंजन
काटो माया मोह का बन्धन
मंगल दो वरदान ॥ जय...

हे करुणाकर ज्ञान दिवाकर
करो कृपा अब तो दुखिया पर
मैं मतिमन्द अज्ञान ॥ जय...

ॐ शरण हो नित मैं ध्याऊँ
मुक्तानन्द अद्भुत मैं पाऊँ
तुम्हारा रूप पहचान ॥ जय...

—ॐ शरण

बहुरूपिया गुरु

गुरु बहुरूपिया जादूगर है,
 किस रूप में इसका ध्यान करूँ ॥ ध्रुव०
 गुरु बहुरूपिया जादूगर है
 कोई भेद न इसका जान है पाता ।
 पल-पल अपना रूप बदल कर
 सबके मन को है भरमाता ।
 कभी सौम्य, गहन, गंभीर राम-सम
 दिखकर, त्याग की सीख सिखाता ।
 'कर्तव्य' भावना से ऊँचा है
 इसका सबको बोध कराता ।
 गुरु बहुरूपिया जादूगर है, किस रूप...
 कभी श्याम वर्ण धर कृष्ण-रूप में
 अपनी दिव्य झलक दिखलाता ।
 कर्मयोग की शिक्षा देकर
 गीता का है तत्त्व बताता ।
 गुरु बहुरूपिया जादूगर है, किस रूप...
 कभी नील-कंठ भोले शंकर-सम
 भक्तजनों पर दया दिखाता ।
 पूर्ण करता सब इच्छाएँ
 कृतकृत्य शरणागत हो जाता ।
 गुरु बहुरूपिया जादूगर है, किस रूप...
 कभी भोले शिशु-सम खेल, खेलकर
 शैशव की है याद दिलाता ।
 कभी वृद्ध व्यक्ति का ज्ञान और अनुभव
 बात-बात में है दर्शाता ।
 गुरु बहुरूपिया जादूगर है, किस रूप...
 कभी शक्तिशाली विश्वस्त पिता सम
 रक्षा का विश्वास दिलाता ।
 कभी होकर ओत-प्रोत ममता से
 माँ का स्नेहमय हाथ फिराता ।
 गुरु बहुरूपिया जादूगर है, किस रूप...

कभी आँख में भरकर रोष और लाली
भैरव का है रूप दिखाता ।
कभी शांत महासागर सा होकर
शांतिदेव है वह बन जाता ।
गुरु बहुरूपिया जादूगर है, किस रूप...
कभी एक साधारण मानव-सम
संसारिक है व्यवहार सिखाता ।
कभी होकर लीन ब्रह्म में पूर्ण
प्रभु का सच्चा रूप दिखाता ।
गुरु बहुरूपिया जादूगर है, किस रूप...
कभी अनन्य भक्त के रूप में दिखकर
गुरु-भक्ति की रीत सिखाता ।
कभी परम संत के रूप में दिखता
सच्चा गुरु-स्वरूप दिखाता ।
गुरु बहुरूपिया जादूगर है, किस रूप...

—श्रीमती गार्गी चड्ढा

मनहरण

क्या ! मन हरणा अब भाया है ।
 क्यों ! वाँदी बनाना सुहाया है ॥
 ऐसा सम्राज बताया है, ऐसा अधिकार जमाया है,
 कहीं और न जाने पाय है, कोई और न आने पाय है,
 मन को निज रूप बताया है ।
 यह चित तो चन्द-चकोर हुआ, वस एक टकटकी लगाय है,
 तन मन ऐसा बेहोश हुआ, अब होश में ही न आय है,
 मदहोश जो ऐसा बनाया है ।
 जीवन में ऐसी उमंग उठी, यह जीवन ही न भाय है,
 सिर चरणों में ऐसा जो झुका, अब उठने ही न पाय है,
 उसे निज स्थान जो पाया है ।
 विरह-अग्नि एक ऐसी लगी, जो बुझने को न आय है,
 प्रभु दासी की तब तब बुझे, जब जोत में जोत मिल जाय है,
 मीरा ने भी ऐसा गाया है ।

—श्रीमती कैलाश प्रताप

गुरुभेट

सूर्य चन्द्र कोई नहीं अपने गुरु समान ।
 मुक्तानन्दने दान दिया अभय मुक्तकल्याण ।
 इनके शब्दकी ज्योति में प्रगट हुवे भगवान ॥
 गुरुगोविन्द दोनों खड़े किसको लागु पाय ।
 बलिहारी गुरु आपकी गोविन्द दियो बताय ॥

—सफ़दर आह



SWAMI MUKTANANDA |PARAMHANSA

EDITORIAL

We are glad to place the third volume of *Guruvāṇī* in the hands of our readers. Most of the articles in *Guruvāṇī* deal with the sadhana based on *gurukripā* and touch upon the different aspects of spiritual life pertaining to the guru, initiation, awakening of divine consciousness or the Kundalini, meditation, visions, purification of mind and body ; and the attainment of inner peace, enlightenment and a sense of well-being. All these aspects are elucidated through the individual experiences of various types.

It is not within the compass of this journal to preach or discuss abstruse metaphysical theories, as it limits itself to and concerns with only the practical aspect of the spiritual pursuit. It aims at serving as an inspiration to those who aspire after some sort of direct Realisation as a result of the spiritual urge within but who feel helpless and doubtful of success in the face of the various hindrances in worldly life. *Guruvāṇī* tries to put before them an easy means, through the help of a guru, to that higher life which is much more peaceful and enlightening than the life which they lead in the modern world—a life of frustration and confusion. They may well find in the articles in this journal practical suggestions to solve their doubts and problems, big and small, which confront the spiritual aspirant, mostly in the initial stage. Being universal in nature, these hints can be easily understood and followed by them, young or old, learned or ignorant, without distinction of caste, creed or religion. Thus, there is something for every one in *Guruvāṇī*.

There are two classes of people—religious and agnostic. The latter are like hard rocks whom, they say, even God cannot change ; while it is the religious who benefit to a greater or lesser extent by acquainting themselves with the means to the Reality. And it is for this class of persons, who have an interest in spirituality and are in quest of Truth and wish to know the secrets of the way to Realisation, that our humble effort in bringing out *Guruvāṇī* is meant.

Spiritual disciplines are not the subject of argument and discussion. One has only to set about practising them. One has not to wait for a suitable opportunity to become free from worldly responsibilities and then make a start, because such an opportunity may never come. Again, one should not doubt one's ability and fitness to start on the path. Nobody is ever too busy or too weak or too sinful to be able to practise religion. We must start from where we are and what we are without any hesitation. Lord Krishna has said in the *Gītā* 'Even a little practice of righteousness saves a person from great danger'—

स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ।

Every step ever taken along the path is a permanent progress. However slight and irregular it may be, it has a subtle power to transform a person's life without his conscious effort to do so.

Next, a question arises as to how does one get the impulse to start on the path ! A person cannot be made spiritually inclined merely by intellectual

discussion, but his religious feelings may be aroused by example and some kind of personal experience. The spiritual experiences do have their own importance on the path to Realisation. It is difficult to have faith in the abstract. The human mind is such that it believes only that which it can see or feel with the senses. It asks for and demands actual experience and living examples. And, indeed, all our knowledge is based upon experience. When a scientist tells us to believe in anything, he does so on the basis of certain results of his experiences which are common to all humanity, and hence subject to verification. In spiritual science the preachings of saints and sages are founded upon their direct experiences which are universal in nature, being capable of happening with others too. God or Truth is known by direct intuition alone. What intuitive perceptions one had, the same can always be had by others too, irrespective of time or country. Like every other science spiritual science has its own method of practice to arrive at the results.

The experiences of spiritual awakening, through the grace of a Master, described in *Guruvāṇī* are not hallucinations of senses, imagination or fancies, but are true perceptions of the sadhakas on the road to the highest goal of human life. Seeing visions, hearing inner sounds (*nāda*) and voices, getting inexplicable tastes and smells, visualizing lights of different colours, going into ecstasies, and other similar spiritual experiences are true; they are the partial manifestations and glimpses of the Absolute Reality which reveals Itself to the sadhakas in varied forms. This assures the seeker of being on the

right path and helps him maintain his enthusiasm.

Moreover, these experiences increase *the faith* of the sadhaka in the Guru, the scriptures and his own spiritual pursuit. When the words of the Guru and the scriptures are corroborated by his own experience, the veracity of the experience is realised. With faith comes *conviction*, which brings in its turn *the feeling of contentment*, because his mind becomes free from all doubts and questions. And this gives him an impetus to continue on the path of sadhana. In the *practical pursuits*, by the grace of one's Guru, a link is easily established with the higher plane of existence—superior to one's own. A glimpse of that divine state makes the sadhaka realise his potentialities of attaining it during his lifetime. The rest lies with him.

Divine experiences are of frequent occurrence in the spiritual life and they are neither to be ignored nor to be discarded as rank superstitions. They are common to all the mystic saints irrespective of time, clime or creed. There are clear indications and references to them in the writings of saints like Tukaram, Kabir, Nivrittinath, Jnaneshwar and others. In our own times, great Masters like Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Sri Raman Maharshi, Bhagwan Nityananda, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Yogananda Paramhansa and his gurus Sri Yuktेश्वar Giri and Lahiri Mahashaya, have testified to the truth and genuineness of such happenings during the period of sadhana. In the scriptural texts, like *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (II, 11-13) also one finds descriptions of similar experiences as a result of spiritual practice. Even in the lives of western saints like St. Teresa

of Spain, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Bernadette and others we find the mention of celestial experiences.

Generally, sadhakas hesitate to reveal their spiritual experiences or divine visions. Some think that if they do so their progress might come to a halt, and with some there is a fear of being laughed at by sceptics. Some fight shy of talking about their own experiences while some try to guard them as a secret treasure. Gurus also do not encourage them to talk about or attribute much importance to the experiences, for there is every possibility of egoism creeping in and the sadhakas missing their goal and going astray. The scriptures say that the mysteries of the Divine should not be revealed to those who know no austerity, have neither devotion nor the spirit of surrender, and who scoff at God. At the same time it is said that one who declares it to the devotees of God, who have faith, is dearer to God than anyone else in the world (*Gītā*: XVIII, 67-69). In this connection one is reminded of an incident in the life of Sri Ramanujacharya. It is said that his guru gave him a *mantra* and told him that he should not reveal it to anyone because the *mantra* was so powerful that anybody who heard it would get salvation immediately but that he himself would go to the darkest hell. As soon as Ramanuja reached home, he went up the roof and started calling people from the village. When a big crowd had gathered he started reciting the *mantra*. His guru happened to pass that way and was surprised to see all this. He called Ramanuja and said 'Have you gone mad? Don't you remember I told you that you would go to hell if you

revealed this *mantra* to anyone?' He replied, 'Gurudev, if by my going to hell all these people can get salvation I am prepared to go to hell for ever!' His guru was highly pleased at his complete selflessness and spirit of service and blessed him.

Thus it is clear that not only there is no harm but the sadhakas will be doing a great service if they reveal their experiences, using discretion, to those who have an innate aptitude for spiritual life, for it is bound to inspire and help them.

The description of certain spiritual experiences makes others understand their own experiences of similar type and saves them from being miserable out of ignorance. Once a medical student from Bezwada came to our Ashram. He had been continuously hearing *nāda* for two years. He thought something had gone wrong with his ears. He consulted doctors, took all sorts of medicines and had his ears washed every two months. He was even hospitalised for some months. But to no avail. He could neither study nor sleep at night and became miserable. Had he known that he was hearing *nāda*, the divine sound, he would have not only been saved from all the misery but encouraged to pursue his spiritual quest. Another case is that of a lady whose Kundalini became very active due to *mantra-japa*. She began to have visions of a cobra. Not knowing the true nature of such a vision she thought and was also told by others, equally ignorant, that the place where she lived was haunted by some evil spirits. She was frightened and fell sick. If such sadhakas know the real cause and significance of what is happening to them, they not only become peaceful

but also derive joy through their visions and various other experiences and their lives become full of contentment and happiness.

II

We shall consider our efforts amply rewarded if *Guruvāṇī* is read by and benefits spiritual aspirants in need of guidance on the path of self-realisation. We need hardly add that the doors of the Ashram are always open to all earnest seekers and they are welcome to derive as much benefit from this place as they want.

The second issue of *Guruvāṇī* received appreciations from all quarters. This has encouraged us to continue our venture with added zeal. Last year we

had started a new feature "Talks with Baba". This was welcomed by the readers and hence we continue the same. There were repeated requests from many devotees for Sri Gurudev's writings in English. In compliance with these requests we have given the English rendering of an illuminating and inspiring article (on *Gurukripā*) by Sri Gurudev, in this number.

As we receive many letters asking for the information about the Ashram, its activities, location, etc., we have tried to furnish the same in detail in the last few pages. This also includes an account of some of the main events of the year.

And now, we leave you to *Guruvāṇī* to see for yourself what it has to say.

O Man ! day and night seek the company of a saint who has developed intense love for God and to whom everything else in the world seems insipid ; whose heart and mind has become pure and whose sense of duality has disappeared ; from whom the words of knowledge flow constantly like a stream of river. His company is always extremely beneficial to you.

Whoever wants to realise the Truth should always seek the company of saints. Destroying the sense of duality experiencing oneness with them, give your mind to them. Drink the nectar of their utterances which comes to you effortlessly. Sunder says that when the Sun of knowledge dawns, the darkness of ignorance disappears.

—SUNDERDAS

CALL OF NARESHWAR

by SRI RANG AVADHUTA MAHARAJ

Offsprings of Immortality !

At every moment, in every place, and in every circumstance experience the divine presence of the All-Merciful God. Walking or standing, sleeping or waking, lying or doing your work feel deep His proximity. Live in the remembrance of His existence at every breath; hearken His footstep at every heart-beat !

What matters in a name? Call Him Rama or Rehman; call Him Ista or Christ; call Him Krishna or Karim; call Him Datta or Datar; call Him Vibudha or Budha, call Him Atma or Pritam; call Him Ishwar or Allah; call Him Jin or Jehovah; call Him Aurmazd or Atmamasta; call Him Parabrahma or Parameshwar; call Him Shiva or Piva; Rang or Rub; call Him Bhagwati or Mary, Marium or Mother or anything else. Invoke Him by any name. Whatever is, is He. In all these infinite names He, the Nameless all-abiding Absolute One reigns ! In all these unending forms, He the Formless One lies concealed !

In mountains behold His unshaking firmness, in rivulets His ever-flowing compassion; have a glimpse of His ever new beauty in the moon, stars and constellations ! Realize *that* divine Truth, Goodness and Grand beauty existing in every creature. In species born learn to see that unborn, unspecified Absolute ! Fill your entire being, your every cell, with Him. Let your whole

life be replete with His existence and essence. Be one with Him !

Let your arms assist His sanctuous work,
Let your feet move towards His blessed Abode,
With your tongue recite His holy name.
In every word, hear His resonance,
With your skin, feel His soft touch everywhere.

Speak not a word that disturbs the complacency of His world-harmony. Step not a foot, do not a deed, which you cannot in His eye. Think not a thought, take not a breath that creates the slightest discord in His universal peace !

Throwing aside the mantle of ego stand before Him an innocent unexpected naked child, an unsophisticated guileless babe; never as a beggar with 'give this and give that' attitude ! In this fleeting world be a toy of that Master's dramatic play and feel the pleasure, experience the joy, be happy ! Be a football at His feet to be kicked up in the skies and see how you enjoy flying in His infinite space ! Is the child fed or hungry, bare or covered, washed or dirty, ill or well—the anxiety of all this is to its mother and to its father. Be a child before Him and experience His unfailing protection ! He who begs, out of discontent, is not worth anything either before the world or the Lord

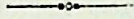
Supreme; and even if you get a bit that way, you get it with contempt. But remember always that the sight of an innocent child creates a feeling of one's own self even in an enemy! Why practise beggarliness as if you are an unprotected orphan, though you are an heir-apparent to the eternal wealth of the universal Father?

Arise! Awake! and with the knowledge of your inherent right cry out in all humility of a child to Him, the Supreme Father of the Universe, ex-

periencing His boundless munificence. And in His constant remembrance be fearless and free from anxiety, move self-intoxicated, and enjoy your divine inborn Sovereignty!

Be free from hatreds, and
Cherish mutual welfare,
Attain peace and plenty
Void of fear and suspense!

Om
Peace Physical! Peace Mental!! Peace
Spiritual!!!



*I bow to Sri Dakshinamurti
in the form of my Guru:*

*To Him whose outward manifestations,
though based on the Real,
appear as illusory, ever-changing objects;*

*Who grants to those who take refuge
in Him through the Vedic pronouncement*

*"Tattvamasi" the boon of immediate
knowledge of Brahman.*

*To which attaining,
a man returns no more to the realm
of birth and death.*

—Sri Sankaracharya

DISCIPLE AND DISCIPLINE

by GURDIAL MALLIK

Man, they say is an epitome of evolution. Accordingly, he has to co-operate consciously with the forces, which help the soul flower forth into the fruition of self-fulfilment. For the purpose, he has to discipline his varied instincts and aptitudes into a harmony or unity. And blessed indeed is the person who has found an enlightened spiritual preceptor to suggest to him what particular discipline would be the best for him to pursue, in the light of his inner aspiration and innate ability. Thus, every one, who desires ardently to make his life meaningful, is a disciple and his pattern of living, his special type of self-discipline.

Man is primarily a disciple of Truth, and not of a certain individual, however highly evolved. For, Truth as Tagore says, is always greater than the most

competent exponents and embodiments of Truth. But as Truth is infinite and man in his daily general behaviour often finite, both in perspective and in performance, he often feels the need of the touch of that Infinite through an illumined fellow-being. The latter only throws open a window through which the aspirant for the Infinite may envision the ageless, ever-shining Truth. The disciple, however, has invariably to remember that the small window through which he has been enabled to glimpse the vast sky is NOT the sky. For, verily the disciple is the nest and Truth the sky, though both are inter-dependent. For, if Truth were not there what would the disciple aspire after and if the disciple were not there whom would Truth inspire and activate?



Know the Atman to be the master ; the body the chariot ; the intellect, the charioteer and mind the reins. The senses are the horses and the objects of the world are the roads. The wise say that being united with the senses and the mind, Atman becomes the enjoyer. With the distracted mind, if the intellect loses its discrimination then the senses become uncontrolled like the vicious horses of a charioteer. But if the intellect with restrained mind possesses discrimination, then the senses come under control like the good horses of a charioteer.

—Kathopanishad

SRI GURU

by SRI SRI SITARAMDAS OMKARNATH

Thakur Sri Sri Sitaram Omkarnathji, the saint from Bengal, is known as the indefatigable preacher of Nama Samkirtan. He has twentysix ashrams throughout the whole of India. He visits them from time to time but has no fixed place of residence. He is the sponsor of many journals in Bengali and Hindi including one in English "The Mother"—published from Calcutta.

Mind ! If thou askest for peace
Think for ever of Sri Guru.
Thou needst not go to the wilderness
Nor needst thou be parted from dear ones.
Pray thou earnestly to Shiva,
Thy woes will be gone, peace will come,
Darkness will melt at the Guru's feet,
And thy life on earth will be fruitful.
Sing and sing the Guru's name,
And say, 'Victory to Guru.'
He will come to soothe pain,
To console thee and arouse thee.

As when going to a strange country, one must abide by the directions of one who knows the road, while taking the advice of many would lead to confusion, so in trying to reach God one should follow implicitly the advice of a single Guru who knows the way to God.

—Sri Ramakrishna

GURUKRIPA

— THE EASIEST MEANS TO THE GOAL SUPREME —

by SWAMI MUKTANANDA

What is the ultimate goal of life and how to attain it? Since very ancient times the Hindu scriptures have expounded this theme. The seers of profound wisdom have said that 'to get entirely rid of pain, suffering and sorrow' and 'to attain full-measure of Absolute Bliss' is the real aim and end of all beings.

Not only mankind but the entire existence on this Earth, from the tiniest to the largest, seek happiness and pleasure. Each person strives, in several ways, to get happiness, peace, plenty and joy. It is for happiness that men think of running factories and other enterprises or build houses and lay gardens or raise families. For the same reason do we pursue varied arts, see dramas, wear dresses, enjoy feasts, etc. In the whole routine of life, the quest is for happiness. Thus happiness is the real goal of man's life.

Really speaking, in all this, a man is seeking lasting happiness, but he does not know where and how to find it. Actual attainment of such ceaseless Eternal Bliss which can be obtained by entering into the realm of Transcendental Joy is itself described as *Mokṣa* or God-realisation. This is religion. Religion is realisation and verily this is the highest purpose and ultimate goal of a man's life.

It is true that a man can feel and experience the Supreme Bliss in his own being, can realise the very essence of

existence within himself and can even transform his being into that highest Essence. Every country has its own traditional method of approach to the ultimate Fulfilment. To a little or larger extent people of all countries know the Supreme Truth or the Divine Essence because everyone hopes to find everlasting joy and peace. Therefore, it can be said that the attainment of Supreme Bliss is the *summum bonum* of all human endeavours and there are various means and systems which are being followed in the world to attain this goal.

The different religious paths and all the philosophical systems are, generally, enunciated by great seers. Jnana, Yoga, Bhakti and the path of the Siddhas based on Gurukripa are the chief among them. These paths are closely allied to one another. Each path is, however, singularly perfect and thorough in itself. All the religions, all the paths and all the sects belong to One Supreme Being and ultimately lead to Him alone.

JNANAMARGA THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is one of the means leading to God-realisation. It is knowing one's real Self by acquiring knowledge of the Truth in its essence, through the teachings of a guru. According to the *Gitā*, the *Brahma-sūtras* and the *Upa-niṣads*, that Chaitanya Atman or Soul

Consciousness which pervades everything without any distinction whatsoever; which is the sole support of everything; which having no other support than itself is ever perfect-in-itself and is self-existent; which, though residing in all the various types of bodies does not assume those bodily forms and without changing its own true nature exists in everything as its own Self—is itself the indwelling soul of every being and that again is the adorable Purushottama, the Highest Being of all beings.

The *Vimarśinī*, which is a commentary by Kshemaraj on the *Śiva-sūtras*, defines Chaitanya Atman as चेतयते इति चेतनः सर्वज्ञानक्रियास्वतन्त्रः, तस्य भावः चैतन्यं (Chetana is that which imparts consciousness and possesses an independent power of creation as well as knowledge of all kinds; its state is known as Chaitanya). That ever-shining Chaitanya, which is completely different from the insentient, enters all inanimate things and brings them to life; and though assuming their varied forms, ever remains intangible. It is without any mark (*alinga*) whatever and therefore always unrecognizable. It is all-pervading even though it is not visible to those without the eye-of-wisdom. It has neither hands nor feet still it is firmly holding all the elements of the entire Universe and travels everywhere. Sitting in all-steadiness it proceeds afar in all quarters. To see without eyes and to speak without tongue are its amazing glory and greatness. With the twinkling of its eyes there occurs creation and dissolution of the whole Universe. Although it is ever present in its fullness in the hearts of all human beings, it is imperceptible

to those who have not earned the grace of the guru—that is to say it remains concealed. That highest Chaitanya is Satchidananda (Truth, Consciousness and Bliss), which is described as the ultimate goal of life in Vedanta.

Put in a nutshell, the Chaitanya, which imparts consciousness to all and yet remains aloof and absolutely independent, is itself the various deities or to say the truth that alone is the Supreme Lord; and verily that is the Atman, seated in the hearts of all living creatures. To know such an Atman, through hearing (*śravaṇa*) and repeatedly reflecting (*manana*) upon the teachings of the guru, and then to become identical with it through the practice of meditation (*nididhyāsana*) is the way of Jnanis.

Whilst realising the Atman, a few truly fortunate ones instantaneously become identical with that infinite universal Chaitanya, in which they merge and melt their individualities or their finite selves. This is like a droplet of water becoming an ocean by losing its name, form and identity into the immense vastness of the ocean. But this comparison is also inadequate; because the droplet of water loses name and form, while the Atman neither loses nor abandons the name and form nor regards them as unreal, but it merely transforms finite Self into Infinitude. That is to say, the seeker, pursuing the path of Knowledge as taught by the guru, merges his consciousness into all-pervading Chaitanya and thereby establishes its identity with that Chaitanya. Subsequently, he goes on repeating 'I am He', 'I am He' (*Soham, Soham*), and also 'I am the All', 'All are mine'. His 'I' and the 'All' become identical. Thus the Jnani reaches a

state where he becomes free from all divisions like the internal and external, is without the sense of many and one and his Self experiences unity in diversity. Aloof from all, he attains perfection. Seers, the wise ones, have described this state as *turiyātīta*, *nirvikalpa*, etc. which is beyond anything that could be put into words and which is no different from the state of unity between Jiva and Brahman as visualised by the preceptors of Advaita Thought in the well-known sentence (*mahāvākya*) 'I am Brahman' (*Ahaṁ Brahmāsmi*), belonging to *Yajurveda*. This is nothing but Vedanta. In the end absolutely unrestricted Supreme Bliss of Oneness is obtained on this path. After attaining the Divine Bliss the human soul rises above the ordinary feelings of pleasure and pain, and is unaffected by those transient states. Hearing all this one may feel that the path of Knowledge is quite easy for the attainment of Self-knowledge but in actual practice it is extremely hard and attainable only by great effort and repeated endeavour. Nevertheless, one who is prepared to be hanged or crucified tastes the divine nectar and attains immortality. The *Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (I, 11) says ज्ञान्वा देवं सर्वपाशापहानिः (By knowing God, all fetters are destroyed).

YOGAMARGA

THE PATH OF CONCENTRATION

Another means to God-realisation is Yoga. Restraining the thought-waves which are continuously formed and modified in the mind, is known as Yoga. The word Yoga comes from the Sanskrit root *yuj* to unite; therefore Yoga also means uniting one's Self with the Universal Consciousness. According to

Maharshi Patanjali, one has to achieve this by practising eight phases of Yoga, namely, *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi*.

In this path of Yoga, complying with *yama*, *niyama* and other successive courses of discipline, one has to assemble all the scattered vital energies both mental and physical, and bring them under one's control to achieve steadiness of the mind. By following this yoga technique, as soon as the mind becomes calm and steady there rises forth an abundance of joy in the heart of the aspirant. This is the same as attaining Blissfulness, the one described in the Vedanta. Ultimately, Jnana, the Knowledge becomes Yoga, the Union. Or to make it more comprehensible it may be explained thus—that Jnana which means knowing the Self as none other than the Supreme Reality, is the same as Yoga which means uniting and melting away of the Self in the Universal Consciousness, eternally pure, illumined and ever free. This being so, Lord Krishna has said in the *Gītā* (V, 4-5) :

सांख्ययोगौ पृथग् बालाः प्रवदन्ति न पण्डिताः ।
एकमप्यास्थितः सम्यग् उभयोर्विन्दते फलम् ॥
यत् सांख्यैः प्राप्यते स्थानं तद् योगैरपि गम्यते ।
एकं सांख्यं च योगं च यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥

[It is the ignorant and not the wise who speak of *Sāṅkhya* (Jnana) and *Yoga* as different. He who is rightly established even in one, wins to the fruit of both. The goal that Sankhyas attain is also reached by the Yogis. He sees truly who sees both Sankhya and Yoga as one]. This justifies in very clear words that the final attainment is the same, whether one follows the path

of Knowledge which is a direct approach to Self-knowledge as propounded by the Vedānta or the path of Yoga which shows a method to reach the *nirvikalpa samādhi* through the practice of eightfold Yoga.

Maharshi Patanjali has formulated the *Yoga-sūtras* which is a very important work on the science of Yoga. In a few aphorisms he has given the most useful directions for any spiritual aspirant. He is considered the highest authority on Yoga and the book, also known as *Yoga-darśan*, is prescribed as a text for the systematic study of Yoga. It does not contain theories which may involve intellectual reasoning or controversial disputes, but it is only a practical treatise on the science of Yoga.

This practical aspect of Yoga first of all helps to make the body physically fit and strong by purifying the elementary constituents which compose the human body. One may ask why so much importance is given to the physique. I would say that a healthy body is *sine qua non* for the practice of Yoga. It is said that the body is the first means to practise religion—*शरीरमाद्यं खलु धर्मसाधनम्*। How can one be happy or feel comfortable if the body is either sick, diseased or weak? And how is the practice of religion or any form of spiritual discipline possible for such a one? How can he be happy in life? Therefore, the Yoga, a very practical science as it is, in the very beginning, not only emphasises this point but is even capable to make the human body strong and sturdy, provided the instructions are strictly carried out. In the end it elucidates in all the details how one can attain, in the state of *samādhi*, an irrevocable union with the Pure Undifferentiated Consciousness by restrain-

ing the mind and senses through various exercises like *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra* etc. The path of Yoga is complete and exhaustive-in-itself. Even then, one is earnestly advised to have a teacher for proper guidance.

Now, coming to the *Yoga-sūtras* proper, the third *sūtra* says तदा द्रष्टुः स्वरूपेऽवस्थानम् (at that time the aspirant will be established in his own true state). This is the highest fulfilment of Yoga. When after repeated attempts at concentration he succeeds in bringing under control all the modifications of the mind, the Yogi sees what his own true nature is and attains Perfection or the Supreme Blessedness. To attain and to be established in one's own real nature is the reward or fruition which Yoga yields to the Yogi. In the *Gītā* (VI, 46) also the Lord commands तस्माद् योगी भवार्जुन (therefore, O Arjuna, become a Yogi). For this reason, it can be said that even the Lord is in favour of and agreeable to the practice of Yoga.

Besides Maharshi Patanjali there are a few other omniscient seers like Vyasa, Yajñavalkya, Kapilmuni and Shveta-shvatara who have written on Yoga, which is an unfathomable subject. Attainment of Yogananda which is the bliss experienced at union with God in a state of *samādhi* through the practice of concentration and meditation, is the main objective of the Yoga.

All discreet persons, even though they be householders, can practise this Yoga, because it does not deny or oppose a modest and rational worldly life. On the contrary, it proves complementary to it. It does not in any way obstruct nor cause hindrance in their regular life. Actually, in course of time, it so happens that the Yoga thus prac-

tised becomes their friend in daily life.

Many persons are frightened at the name of Yoga. They seem to believe that Yoga is meant for those who renounce their household and live in a jungle or a cave subsisting on roots or tubers. This conception is entirely false. In fact, Yoga is an admirable way of life to be followed without any fear by all people in the world.

Even on a cursory study you will find that each of the eight constituents of Yoga are being actually practised at least in part, in our daily life. For example just think over the following matters. *Yama* and *niyama* in a broad sense means observance of certain rules of conduct. *Asana* means sitting in a particular posture. Are there no rules and regulations observed in worldly life? Does not one, in worldly life, try to sit in an orderly form? Can an artist, a sculptor, a watchmaker or an engineer finish his work properly without concentrating and without forming an image of the target before his mental eye? Can anyone be crowned with success without planning anything in the mind at the outset? Can the students without steadying their minds, concentrate on the studies or be successful in their examinations? Can anyone get a sound sleep without making the mind free from thoughts and anxieties? No, never are these things possible. Here comes in Yoga which teaches us how to concentrate, how to make the mind steady and free from thoughts, how to train and cultivate the mind so as to get absorbed in the set target or goal. And the instances given above very clearly show how the different parts of Yoga are made use of or practised now and again, in our daily life. Nor is this practice limited to the physical and mental

plane alone. It extends as well to the moral aspect. Is not a wife truthful and loyal in her dealings with her husband? She is always honest to him. May be she is not honest, to the same degree, in her dealings with other persons in day-to-day life. The difference is only in degree and not in kind.

Now-a-days, we see many hospitals crowded with the sick. Why? The primary cause is that most of the people, today, lead a disorderly and irregular life. Those who lead a life in conformity with the rules laid down in the science of health are immune from suffering and paying visits to the physicians. A sound body or good health is of utmost value to a person. It is his real wealth. Regular habits and a balanced way of life is 'Yoga put into practice'. Yoga teaches these regulations and a way of life most conducive to health. Thus, in its own inimitable way, Yoga chases away all weaknesses. It creates Heaven on Earth by transforming all ugliness into celestial beauty. Yoga is, therefore, a peerless friend both of the worldly-minded as well as those spiritually inclined. And it should be practised daily, regularly and with due respect.

BHAKTIMARGA

THE PATH OF DEVOTION

Like Jnana and Yoga, Bhakti is also a means to God, perfect-in-itself. Intense love of God is known as Bhakti or devotion. The way of love is sweetest like nectar. Premananda, Purnananda, Yogananda, Satchidananda, Brahmananda—all these terms are used to convey the same meaning, namely, the enjoyment of Perfect Bliss. The Jnani on attaining Self-knowledge comes to realise that the entire world, full of

movable and immovable entities, is nothing but the manifestation of One Supreme Reality. Knowing this he becomes free of all dualities like pain and pleasure, love and hate, likes and dislikes etc., and then within his inmost Self he becomes the subject of Perfect Bliss and is all-enjoyment. When the Yogi, through the practice of *yama*, *niyama*, *prāṇāyāma* and *dhyāna*, succeeds in attaining the state of mindlessness, then he also experiences the same Supreme Bliss which the Jnani does through Self-knowledge. Thus Yogi is intoxicated by Yogananda, Jnani is absorbed in Jnanananda; and similarly Bhakta gets drunk with or enraptured in Premananda. This is the ecstatic delight of love and verily this is the nectar-of-love of all the love-stricken devotees of God.

The goal may seem to differ because the approaches are different in the paths of Jnana, Yoga and Bhakti; but, in truth, it is not so, for even the Bhaktas love and adore the eternal, imperishable, perfect Brahman alone. In *Śrīmad Bhāgavat* (X, 14, 32) it is said :

अहो भाग्यमहो भाग्यं नन्दगोपत्रजौकयाम् ।
यन्मित्रं परमानन्दं पूर्णब्रह्म सनातनम् ॥

[O what a great fortune of Nanda and other cowherds living in Vraja, since (Lord Krishna) the imperishable perfect Brahman, full of bliss is their friend]. Is there a place or a person without love? How can there be love where there is no *rasa* (essence of joy)? The very core and nature of God is love, bliss and ecstasy. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (II, 7) says रसो वै सः । रसं ह्येवायं लब्ध्वाऽऽनन्दी भवति (God, verily, is *rasa* and truly, on getting the *rasa* one becomes blissful). The same *upaniṣad*

says further (III, 6) :

आनन्दाद् हि एव खल्विमानि भूतानि जायन्ते ।
आनन्देन जातानि जीवन्ति । आनन्दं प्रयन्त्यमिसंविशन्ति ।
(all these beings are indeed born from bliss, being born they live by bliss and after death they enter into bliss). It means that it is from Bliss that the world is created, maintained and destroyed. 'God Himself is the cause of creation' is unequivocally believed by all the *darśanakāras* (philosophers who have founded the six systems of Indian Philosophy). The cause (God) itself is inseparably or thoroughly entwined with its effect (creation). From all this it is distinctly clear that love is the original cause or source of creation—for one grows by love, lives by love and finally even merges in the eternity with love. Love is all-pervading. 'To aspire for the Divine' therefore means 'to love'.

A Bhakta, knowing and seeing his Beloved God to be present everywhere, leads his life happily and contentedly. Such a devotee creates a veritable Heaven wherever he happens to be. Whatever is seen by the eyes the lover perceives therein his charming Beloved; whatever is heard by the ears the lover recognises it as the gentle voice of the Beloved. With the tongue he goes on chanting the sweetest melodies of love in praise of the Beloved, and his entire body feels the softest touch of his darling Beloved. To give an analogy: a drop of water, in the midst of an ocean, beholds nothing but water on all sides. Similarly, the Bhakta perceives God everywhere and rejoices thereby. And do you know how to gain such a sight and such a joy? The means to behold Him thus is through the incessant singing of devotional songs and rendering of loving service, made possi-

ble by merging the entire heart and mind together with intellect, ego and senses with the Beloved; and the Immortal Joy is the final achievement.

This Immortal Joy can, however, only be obtained by the grace of great souls. In the *Narada Bhakti-sūtras* (39) it is said महत्सङ्गस्तु दुर्लभोऽगम्योऽमोघश्च (the company of the great is incomprehensible, infallible and difficult to obtain). It is not easy to come in contact with such-a-one and much less easy to be a recipient of his grace. Nevertheless, without the grace of a man-of-God a devotee cannot become a true lover of God. Through direct contact with god-like saints and their loving influence, the path of love can become easy.

So far we have seen the three different ways and means to attain the ultimate goal of Self-realisation. A person can reach his spiritual goal by the practice of Jnana, Yoga and Bhakti, by one or all the three means. Though these three means of discipline differ from each other, the spiritual aspirant of each path can arrive at the same goal, and can attain the same immortal state. But these means are very hard and wearisome because while practising them one has to suffer a great deal of hardships before obtaining liberation or reaching the peak of Supreme Bliss. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says: क्षुरस्य धारा निश्चिता दुरत्यया दुर्गं पथस्तत्त्वयो वदन्ति (a sharpened edge of a razor, hard to traverse, a difficult path is this—sages declare). The road to Supreme Knowledge is extremely narrow to walk upon and so it is compared to a razor's edge. The path is so arduous that one Hindi poet says it is like chewing the grams made of steel. Lord Himself has said in the *Gītā* (VII, 19) that even a Jnani attains

the state of Supreme Bliss after a hard work of many lives—बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते (a Jnani attains Me at the end of many births).

This being the case a seeker may inquire whether there is any other way to the final goal besides these three. Surely, there is a way. It is an easy discipline which one acquires from a Sadguru. If he is gracious and his kind favour descends upon one, the entire path of sadhana becomes simple, comprehensive and effortless, as it were. It is known as the path of the Siddhas.

SIDDHAMARGA

THE PATH OF THE PERFECT ONES

This easiest and surest means to the goal is also known as *Gurukṛpā*, the grace of a perfect Master. By the grace of a Sadguru a true and earnest disciple cuts out for himself, out of an inaccessible path of sadhana, an easy way to go ahead. On being initiated by the Sadguru, his path is automatically rendered smooth, clear and within easy reach.

SHAKTIPAT-DIKSHA

The grace of the Guru is itself a process of initiation known as *Shaktipat-dikshā*. This is the same process of grace whereby Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansa gave a direct experience of Divinity to Swami Vivekananda, the moment he touched him. Indeed, the process of Shaktipat-diksha is highly mysterious, secret and amazing too. It is a very ancient tradition practised in India. Following are the three typical illustrations of Shaktipat-diksha: (i) the bestowing of grace by means of which Sri Gahaninath, in an instant, made Sri Nivrittinath realise the highest Brahman, (ii) the transmission of

divine Shakti, which happened by an accidental touch of Sri Ramanandaji, which brought about a spontaneous awakening of intense love and devotion to God in Kabir Sahib; (iii) the secret process by which Shankaracharya, just by casting a glance at Hastamalaka, made him a knower of the Self. The first illustration is one of *mānasa* diksha (by the will of sadguru). The second is of *sparsā* diksha (by the touch of sadguru) and the third is of *dṛk* diksha (by the glance of sadguru).

Swami Shankar Purushottam Tirth, the Shankaracharya of Govardhan Math, knew its secret and was thoroughly proficient in initiating by Shaktipat-diksha. His book *Yogavāṇī* (in Bengali and in Hindi) is an authentic treatise on the subject. In the *Gheraṇḍa Saṁhitā*, *Vāyaviya Saṁhitā*, *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Kulārṇava Tantra*, *Yoginī Tantra*, *Āgama Sandarbha*, *Sārdā Tilaka* as well as in the books of *Saiva*, *Vaiṣṇava* and *Saura* paths and in certain *Yogic Upaniṣads* the subject is fully dealt with and their propounders were thorough in it. Even among the Lamas of Tibet this is a customary practice, but all are not familiar with it. Persons of partial and superficial conceptions do not know the subject well enough, and they miscalculate.

Mahaprabhu Sri Gauranga, out of his divine mercy and love, initiated even several bad characters like Nauroji, a notorious dacoit, and also Laxmibai and Satyabai, two harlots. Sri Gauranga Prabhu used to arouse divine love in their hearts, whereupon they turned towards God and spent the rest of their lives in devotion.

Some persons have doubted the efficacy of Shaktipat. Most people, under delusion, misinterpret it as a *Tāntrika*

Sādhana. This is sheer ignorance. Others smell something fishy about it and think it to be either a practice of *Vāma-mārga* or a mode of worship of shakti which is not considered valid by the scriptures. Being misinformed, though erudite scholars, they are on an erroneous path and know not the slightest secret (*rahasya*) of shaktipat. On hearing the word Shakti they presume it has something to do with *śāktas* (worshippers of shakti), and thus remain themselves away from true God-realisation. Since countless ages, shaktipat is used as a secretly concealed means of initiation by the great sages. Concisely, to transmit one's own glory and lustre of Divine Enlightenment into the disciple, and give him an instantaneous direct experience of Brahman, the Eternal Spirit, is the secret meaning of shaktipat.

To explain the above, I will narrate a true story in brief. In Marathawada, there is a town by the name Ambajogai, a place of pilgrimage famous for its temple Jogai-ki-Amba. Once, Jaitrapal the ruling king of the region went on horseback to a Yogi named Mukundrai, and insisted that the yogi should show him the Supreme in the short time required to mount a horse with one leg still in the stirrup. At this obstinacy, by one slash of his own whip, Mukundrai made the king realise the Supreme Reality. By the power acquired through austerities, sages can either bless or curse; in the same way it is not impossible or even difficult for them to transmit spiritual energy in a disciple on the strength of their Divine Knowledge. Besides it is a thing bound to be experienced by earnest and sincere aspirants on the spiritual path.

In every sect of religion there is the tradition of diksha. The real meaning of *dikshā* is to give—to give such an awakening whereby the initiated one can have a superconscious vision of the Lord and ultimately, in course of time, experience his identity with that Supreme Self.

In every human being there dwells a divine Energy, the Kundalini Shakti. This Energy has two aspects: one manifests *samsāra*, the ephemeral worldly existence while the other leads to the Highest Truth. When the Guru transmits his soul-power in the disciple, the latter aspect of the kundalini shakti in him is automatically activated and set into full operation. It opens up a new vista for the Energy to proceed and function inwardly, and indeed this is known as shaktipat-diksha or better still as Gurukripa.

Chiti Shakti, the Pure Consciousness which is full of absolute Bliss, dwells in the Guru in its wholeness. That Energy which has the supreme capacity to create the Universe independently, is termed as Chiti Shakti. Assuming the three different aspects of unity, diversity and unity-in-diversity, creating the Universe of manifold forms out of One; and manifesting many in one, one in many, she reveals an everchanging world in the Atman which is a changeless Reality. This active Energy has many names or an infinite number of aspects, namely, Chiti, Mahamaya, Shiva's Gauri, Narayan's Laxmi, Rama's Sita, Krishna's Radha, Yogi's Kundalini, poet's inspiration and the blissful stream of joy of the Atman. This divine Energy is not in any way different from, or independent of, the Highest Reality. Both, the Reality and its divine Energy are one and the same, just as a

king, the ruler, and his ruling power go together.

When the attributeless, formless, changeless Reality which underlies the entire Universe as a whole and which as the Pure Ultimate consciousness is stirred up then this divine Energy begins to operate in it. In fact, she is the power of becoming, released out of the Eternal Being, expressing Herself through all names, all forms and all changes that we call the world. Indeed She is the most magnificent Power—Sri Kundalini Shakti—of the Supreme Reality. To set into operation this Kundalini in an individual being is known as Shaktipat, call it a favour, blessing, diksha, gurukripa or by any other term and one who gives shaktipat-diksha is a Guru. The *Yogavāsīṣṭha* says—

दर्शनात् स्पर्शनात् शब्दात् कृपया शिष्यदेहके ।
जनयेद्यः समावेशं शमवं स हि देशिकः ॥

(He who, by his gracious look, touch or word gives to the disciple an experience of his identity with the Absolute, is indeed the Guru). In the *Kulārṇava Tantra* it is said—

गुरोर्यस्यैव संस्पर्शात् परानन्दोऽभिजायते ।
गुरुं तमेव वृणुयात् नापरं मतिमान्नरः ॥

(A discriminating person should choose as his guru none else but one by whose touch he experiences highest bliss).

EXPERIENCES OF AWAKENED KUNDALINI, THE CHITI SHAKTI

After being initiated by such a Guru various types of internal activities occur in the disciple's body. Some of those activities are being described here, in the passage that follows, to provide helpful information to those

earnest aspirants who have already received initiation and are devoted to their Guru.

The moment Guru's spiritual energy enters into the disciples, some of them experience great joy, while others either become apparently dull and stupefied or restless in their minds. With certain disciples a variety of strange bodily reactions like yogic postures, gestures, tremors, dancing poses etc. begin to happen involuntarily in every part of his body. At this the disciple gets wonder-struck. Some even get frightened. For a short period of time one gets pain in almost all parts of the body. Then again, various internal stirrings may occur in the heart, head and abdomen and feelings like throbbing of the muscles and fascinating thrilling sensations may be experienced. Some may feel drowsy and some may even get into a state of deep meditation without making any effort. When the disciple begins to see in meditation the lights of different-colours like white, black, red, azure-blue etc., his joy increases day by day and he holds on to his spiritual discipline with greater enthusiasm. Sometimes during meditation one may see temples, mountain-caves and even the other worlds. Thereafter, a divine light of indescribable lustre is always visible to the disciple during the time of meditation. That light is considered as being the light of the qualified or manifested Reality (*saguṇa Brahman*). The *Pāṣupata-brahma Upaniṣad* describes it thus—

अकल्पितोद्भवं ज्योतिःस्वयं ज्योतिः प्रकाशितं ।

अकस्माद् दृश्यते ज्योतिस्तज्ज्योतिः परमात्मनि ॥

(The light does not appear by any pre-imagination, but is manifested by itself.

Such self-resplendent light is seen unexpectedly during meditation. The light, which thus makes itself evident, is existing in the Supreme Self). In this divine light are also seen the other worlds, whereby the disciple comes to know that *Pitṛloka* (the world of the manes), *Chandraloka* (the world of the Moon) and *Devaloka* (the world of the gods) are all true and that such abodes do exist.

Then again, in the initiated ones the various types of emotions (*aṣṭa-bhāva*) are automatically awakened. Overwhelmed with emotions, the disciple swims in an ocean of Infinite Bliss, and overflows with joy and delight. Day-by-day with the increase of zeal and fervour in spiritual endeavour, he has countless experiences. And as the aspirants have new visions and divine experiences their steadfastness, enthusiasm and venture in the practice of discipline are also refreshed; which help them to continue with added vigour. Such aspirants, abiding by the just rules of conduct, may carry out their daily routine of worldly dealings, may visit and stay in any part of the country and yet, due to their intense faith see and feel the presence of their adorable Guru everywhere. Be assured, this is no myth, neither a story from mythology nor am I writing about magic. Rather it is an unmistakable fact that the Supreme Spirit is truly and eternally all-pervasive, and has penetrated each and every atom of the visible Universe. This Self as Consciousness permeates the entire world of inanimate objects and sentient beings too.

We find this being explained in the *Vimarsinī* thus—

तदेव भवति स्थूलं स्थूलेपाधिवशात्प्रिये ।
स्थूलसूक्ष्मविभेदेन तदेकं संव्यवस्थितम् ॥

(O beloved, *That* itself becomes the gross by conditioning itself into gross. *That* alone exists in the different gross and subtle entities). Just as the Universal Consciousness (*Chiti*) by limiting itself becomes the individual consciousness (*citta*), similarly the sentient (*cetan*) changes itself to appear insentient. That is to say, the highly-luminous Self, while manifesting itself as the gross entities becomes conditioned and limited in the form of varied objects. The Pervasive Self becomes the pervaded. Therefore, the pervaded is not separate from the Pervasive because the Pervador and the things pervaded by Him are the same, not different. I am reminded of a saint's poem (in Marathi) which may be literally rendered thus :

Whether I call you ear-ring or anklet
Or name you as brooch or bracelet,
The inherent gold glitters bright in
you,
So is the Self, shining out of every-
thing in view.

Likewise, there are other examples to explain this: (i) this physical body of ours, heterogeneous as it is, is formed from a drop of chyle, (ii) throughout a cotton fabric there is not anything but warp and weft made of only cotton. In the fabric there are threads and in the threads there is cotton. Similarly Lord, the Supreme Spirit, is the basis of everything including movable and immovable entities of this Universe. Therefore, Universe itself is the Cosmic Self.

Let me give one more illustration to elucidate the subject further : a steam-

er leaving the Bombay Dock is in the sea till it reaches the port of Mangalore. The steamer is not, at any moment, separated from the sea. So do the aspirants, initiated by shaktipat, dwell in that one Universal Consciousness—the *Chiti*—whether they carry on their spiritual practices at one end of the world or the other. It is therefore not at all surprising if they see their Guru or their chosen deity in visions even when they are thousands of miles away from the Guru, because just as the steamer is always in the water till it reaches the port, so also the indwelling Chaitanya is always with the aspirants in all places, at all times and under all conditions. Chaitanya is uniform everywhere as it is all-pervading. All this is absolutely true. There is no false propaganda, heresay or jugglery in what I have said above.

In the *Tantrasāra* it is said that the Lord's shakti is full of infinite wonders — तच्चमत्कार इच्छाशक्तिः । It is She that wills various yogic processes in the sadhakas. In this state an array of wonderful yogic *āsanas*, *mudrās* and different types of meditation take place. These yogic exercises cleanse the internal nervous system. Generally by this process of *nāḍī-śuddhi* many diseases and ailments get cured. Many types of *prāṇāyāmas* are also performed automatically. These then open up all the *cakras* (psychic nervous centres) and thus in a very simple and easy manner the passage in the *Suṣumnā* is cleared of all obstructions. The *prāṇa* rising through the *Suṣumnā*, on reaching the *Sahasrāra* gets stabilised. That is to say, the *prāṇa* and *apāna* become even. This process of *nāḍī-śuddhi* goes on until the *prāṇa* and *apāna* are finally equalized. It is said in

constant linking of the mind to the divine sound the aspirant reaches a stage where he is free from all feelings of separateness like mine and thine, one and many etc. Then, having transcended the three ordinary states of wakefulness, dream and deep sleep, he remains more or less in the fourth state of *turiya*, where he becomes fully youthful and enjoys extraordinary bliss and profound tranquillity called *Turiyānanda*. The *Śiva-sūtras* (I, 7) describe his state as जाग्रत्स्वप्नसुषुप्तभेदे तुर्याभोगसंभवः (apparently being in any of three states of waking, dreaming or deep sleep, he ever abides in the *turiya* state). This is the fruit of Yoga attainable by Gurukripa.

This Yoga is also known as Siddhayoga because it is accomplished only through a *Siddha* (a perfect yogi). Without the grace of a siddha it is very difficult to reach the superconscious state through the practice of any other yoga. This is the reason why this path is also known as Mahāyoga. And rightly so, because the gists of all yogas are included in it. Therefore this particular approach to the ultimate is named as Siddhayoga, Mahāyoga, Pūrṇayoga, Parashivayoga, or Gurukripa.

By the Guru's grace revelation of the Unrivalled One who is all-blissful is readily obtained. This direct comprehension and immediate experience appear most amazing to the Yogis and is spoken of in the *Śiva-sūtras* (I, 12) as विस्मयो योगभूमिकाः (the successive stages of Yoga are full of wonders).

At the completion of this Yoga, as its ultimate fulfilment the Yogi becomes equal to Shiva as stated in the *Śiva-sūtras* (III, 25) — शिवतुल्यो जायते । Just as a worm is transformed into a wasp by the contact of a wasp or as water

when poured into milk becomes milk, so also by the touch or grace of the Guru and by the union of Shiva and Shakti in the *Sahasrāra* Jiva, the soul with limited consciousness becomes Shiva, the omniscient, omnipotent, Absolute Being. Thereupon that perfected Yogi forgets about his parentage, caste, creed, ancestry, racial group and even the consciousness of his own body. Instead, the feeling of being one with Shiva (*Śivoham*) starts repeating itself in his heart.

After being initiated by a guru, an earnest disciple, on continuing his spiritual practices regularly for a period of three, six, nine or twelve years (the period depending on the disciple's calibre, purity of heart, intensity of practice and spiritual development) will be able to experience the Divinity within his own Self. Thus he becomes self-realised. The Mahashakti Kundalini, always residing in the heart of the Yogis gives them different kinds of wonderful experiences and moulds them according to Her Will. To someone She bestows poetic genius, to another She gives all erudition and wisdom and makes the former compose poetry of incomparable beauty and the latter masterpieces in literature, scriptural science etc. A third one may be bathed by Her in the ecstatic stream of Divine Love. All people enjoy peace and derive happiness in close association with such blessed Yogis. What to speak about the human beings! even nature is enamoured by their proximate company, for wherever they stay the trees and creepers grow luxuriantly, orchards bear fruits in plenty, flower-gardens blossom in marvellous beauty and agriculture yields best of harvests. The surrounding groves and woodlands

remain evergreen and look as refreshing and charming as celestial gardens. Wherever the Parashiva's Shakti, which manifests and expands the Universe, is active, the trees and the green foliage, fruits and flowers—everything blooms in abundance most naturally. It is true that the entire atmosphere around this Yogi vibrates with joy, abounds in love and pervades with his Shakti. Whosoever goes there with love, devotion and faith gets the experience of the divine influence and radiation of the Shakti and feels peaceful within. All these wonders are due to the munificence of Mahayoga.

When the Mahashakti Kundalini after entering the *Suṣumnā* has made Herself known about Her qualities of giving supernatural experiences like joy, strength, peace, bliss etc. to the aspirant, then he carries out the spiritual exercises in good spirit and with enthusiasm. Being inspired by the ever new and mysterious experiences of the Kundalini, he practises Yoga regularly and punctually. Soon he feels within his heart the spontaneous rising of the Divine Love. Just as an addict cannot give up his habits and is restless until he secures his daily dose of intoxicant, students of Siddhayoga cannot be calm and restful without their daily practice of spiritual disciplines. By this kind of regular practices, the Kundalini, which stays in the *Mulādhāra*, gradually travels upwards piercing the *cakras* on her way until she reaches *Sahasrāra*, the thousand-petalled lotus in the crown of the head, where She in the last phase of her kinetic form unites with Her Lord Shiva and becomes one with Him. When the Kundalini Shakti of an aspirant is thus pacified by uniting with Shiva in the *Sahasrāra*, She be-

comes static after completing the full course of Her activities and the spiritual endeavour of an aspirant gets fulfilled. One who has completed the full course of yoga-sadhana is alone a perfect Yogi. When in this way, the Kundalini Shakti is thoroughly stilled in the *Sahasrāra*, there arises in him Pure Knowledge. The *Śiva-sūtras* (I, 21) state that with the dawning of the Pure Knowledge one attains the perfection of God Almighty— शुद्धविद्योदयाच्चेष्टात्वसिद्धिः । Thereafter the Yogi does not remember about his spiritual endeavour and remains ever absorbed in the Supreme State. When he was under the veil of ignorance, he felt miserable, poor, imperfect, attached, powerless etc., but after awakening of the divine Shakti he realises himself as perfect, accomplished, non-attached, powerful, full of love and of divine nature. In the joy of his attainment he utters 'I am Bliss' (*ānandoham*) and by drinking a fresh cup of joy everyday, he remains in a state of deep drunkenness. Now, he has no more to suffer from the dual malady of birth and death for these maladies dare not appear before him.

Those who have their divine Kundalini Shakti awakened, naturally become fully drunk by sipping from the spontaneous fountain of bliss within. Just as a drop of water which has fallen into the ocean sees water on all its sides and merging with it acquires vast expanse, losing its separate existence, so also the Yogi in the spontaneity of his inner joy visualises himself as the Universal Spirit, pervading the whole world, and ultimately attains profound placidity and repose in it. How one feels on reaching this state is expressed in the following verse from *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā* (I, 12) :

सर्वो ममायं विभव इत्येवं परिजानतः ।
विश्वात्मनो विकल्पानां प्रसरेऽपि महेदता ॥

(He who has realised that the entire Universe is his Self and knows that 'all this glory of manifestation in mine', possesses the power of the Supreme Lord even if different ideas have their play in his mind). The Yogi who perceives the great visible Universe as a grand sport of his own Self or of the Supreme Spirit, ever remains in the unchanging state of true Knowledge, though he may perceive differences. He sees the unfolding of Parashiva being

manifested in all entities. He perceives Shiva in front and behind, above and below and on all sides. He knows nothing except Shiva. He himself becomes Shiva. To him—

शिवो दाता शिवो भोक्ता शिवं सर्वं इदं जगत् ।
शिवो यजति यज्ञश्च यः शिवः सोऽहं एव हि ॥

—Shiva is the giver and Shiva is the enjoyer. Shiva is this whole universe. Shiva is the sacrificer and the sacrifice. 'I am that same who is Shiva'.

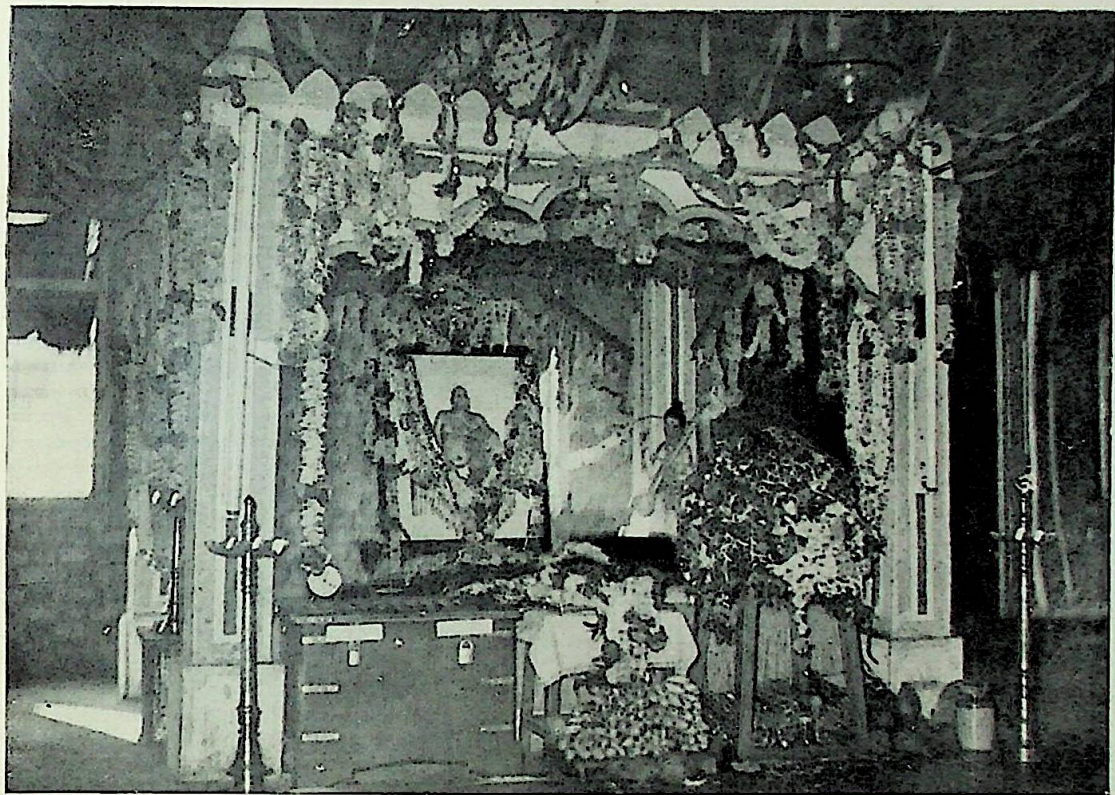
May this be dedicated to
Sadguru Sri Nityananda.



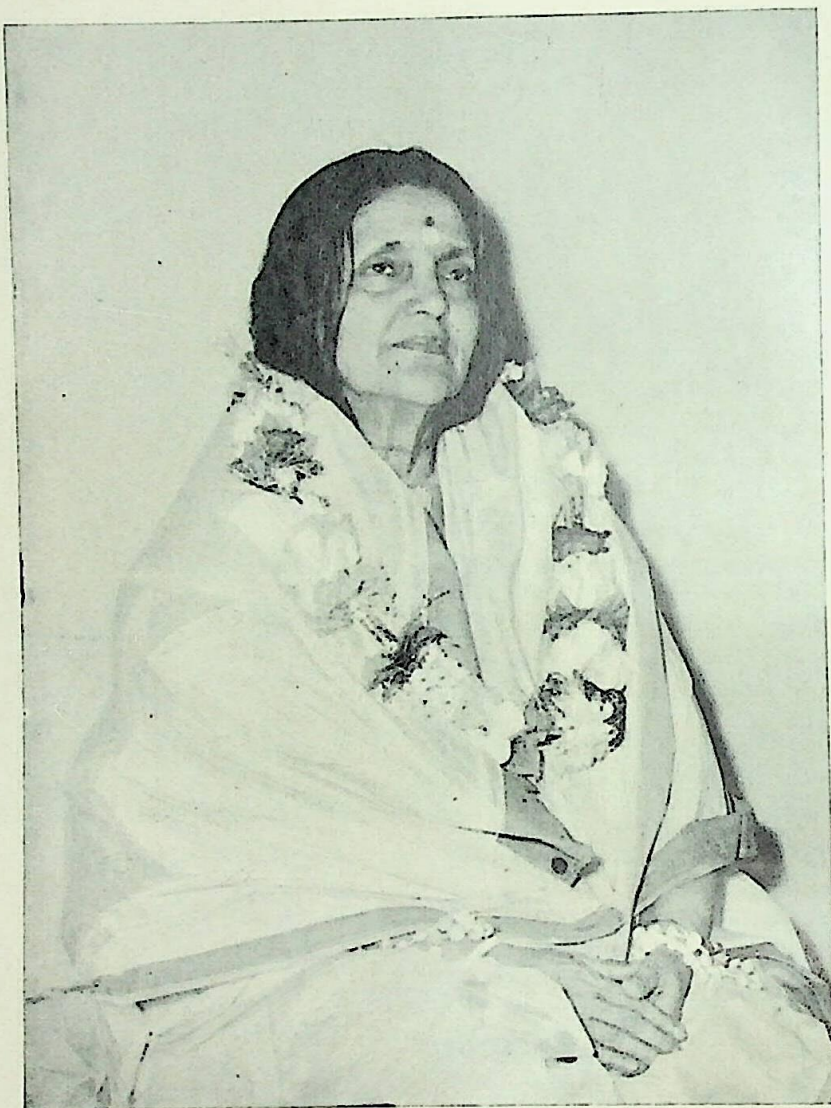
The living body is dead, and has been placed in the cemetery. Passions are crying that their lord is gone, and death is crying that he has lost his control. The fire of illumination is burning the body with the fuel of dispassion. The pitcher of egoism is whirled round the head, and is broken to pieces. The death-cry 'I am God' emerges vociferously. The family lineage has been cut off, and the body is delivered to Him who is its Lord. Tuka says that when the body was being reduced to ashes, the lamp of the Guru's compassion was burning on it.

I saw my death with my own eyes. Incomparably glorious was the occasion. The whole Universe was filled with joy, I became everything. I had hitherto stuck to only one place, being pent up in egoism. By my deliverance from it, I am enjoying the harvest of bliss. Death and birth are now no more. I am free from the littleness of 'me' and 'mine'. God has given a place for me to live, and I am proclaiming God to the world.

—Sant Tukaram



BHAGWAN SRI NITYANANDA'S SAMADHI-SHRINE



Most Revered MA SRI ANANDA MAYEE

SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND

by MAHADEV YADAV

Adore—young and old
Small or great—all alike !
And ye shall find a Sadguru
Wise and kind to shower grace.

Ekhnath Maharaj

Since my childhood, I loved the stories of Saints and God. They always left a deep impression on me and kept me wondering as to the possibility of being face to face with the Almighty. I developed a faith that by repeating God's name, I will some day receive His Grace. So I began to do *japa*. As years went by, I was convinced that mere book-knowledge or mechanical repetition of holy names would lead me nowhere and that a Guru was even more essential in spiritual than in material sciences. The famous Saint Tukaram Maharaj has very aptly said that for the realisation of the ultimate truth there is no other alternative than to first hold fast to the holy feet of a Sadguru—सद्गुरुवाचूनी संपडे ना सोय। बरावे ते पाय आधीं आधीं ॥ And so, the thought of meeting a Master became uppermost in my mind.

One day, in May 1961, in this mood, I was just taking a stroll in the streets of Bombay when my attention was drawn to a picture hanging in a shop by the road-side. I went nearer to see it more closely. My curiosity was immediately rewarded as the shopkeeper volunteered the information that it was the photograph of Bhagwan Sri Nityananda, the famous Saint of Ganeshpuri near

Vajreshwari, which was also famous for its hot water springs. I thanked the shopkeeper for the information and went my way just wondering whether he was after all my Master !

Not many days after this I made a trip to Ganeshpuri. "Darshan! darshan!" I heard someone shouting while I was alighting from the bus and saw a long queue outside Bhagwan Nityananda's residence. With a cocoanut and a flower garland in my hands, I too stood in the queue awaiting my turn for the *darshan*. I was happy at the thought of seeing a great living Master, and when I finally stood in his august presence, I felt that I was really in the presence of a sage who was one with the Supreme Reality. He was sitting in an arm-chair and was so indrawn that he hardly moved. He looked like a statue but all the same, I had a distinct feeling that his deep silence was very communicative. The crowd was pressing hard and I had to cut short my *darshan*, planning for a second one soon.

I returned to Ganeshpuri within a couple of months and once again I saw the adorable Bhagwan in the same divine state as before. This time he gave me a casual glance. But the moment he glanced at me my heart was filled with

divine joy beyond description. When I came out of the room the joy increased a hundredfold and I felt as if my heart would burst under its pressure. For a while I stood motionless filled with that heavenly joy and peace and then a divine voice as if that of Bhagwan Nityananda within me urged: "Go there and hold him fast". I could not understand where to go and whom to hold, so I asked a nearby person whether there was any other Saint in the vicinity. But even before the man could reply, my feet automatically turned towards Shree Gurudev Ashram. I arrived at the Ashram like an automaton and then became conscious that I was in the presence of a Saint seated in an arm-chair. The divine voice within me somehow made me understand that this was another form of the same great sage whom I had seen a few minutes back. I felt I was looking at Lord Shiva incarnate. Later, I came to know that I was in the presence of Swami Muktananda Paramhansa, head of Shree Gurudev Ashram and worthy disciple of Bhagwan Sri Nityananda. It was surely the latter who had urged me from within to go to Swami Muktananda, because within hardly about a month Bhagwan Nityananda took *Mahasamadhi*, leaving me entirely to the care and guidance of Swami Muktananda.

A week after Bhagwan Nityananda discarded his body, I saw him in a dream, in the early hours of the morning. He was sitting on a stone platform. My wife had laid her offerings at his feet and was sitting happily before him. With a smile on his face he was looking at her. After a while he pointed his finger towards a temple to his right and said to my wife, "God will bless you". Though I was sitting next to my

wife, he was not even looking at me, so I cried out, "O Bhagwan! please look at me also. Just see me trembling. I can't get up. I am stuck up". At this he gave a hearty laugh and said, "Don't worry about it. Such things do happen in the beginning." He then disappeared.

INITIATION

After this I started going more often to Swami Muktananda at Ganeshpuri. In my very first meeting with him I had a feeling that it was he who was going to be my guide and Master. I shall therefore refer to him as Sri Gurudev or Baba hereafter. Even though I started going to him I could not gather enough courage to ask him questions in the beginning. Each of my visit to the Ashram increased my love and devotion towards him and my fifth visit proved successful. It was 5th of December 1962. I was standing before Baba in the hall as usual when he, who knew my innermost thoughts, glanced at me and asked, "Did you not come here some time ago?" I said, "Yes Baba, I did come quite a few times." As I uttered these words my fear had gone and I gathered courage. I bowed before him and asked if I may be permitted to put some questions.

Baba: "Yes. What is it?"

I: "Can a man attain self-realisation in this birth?"

Baba: "Yes, of course. One can attain it even at this very moment. But have you done any *satsanga* for that?"

I: "No. What shall I do then?"

Baba: "It will happen gradually by your coming to this place as often as you can."

(Ignorant as I was, I asked again)

I: "Is no sadhana or spiritual endeavour necessary for it?"

Baba: (After looking intently at me for a while) "Yes, it is necessary."

I: "Pray, what shall I practise then?
Your grace is the chief thing required to practise sadhana. And be kind to show me a simple and easy means of discipline."

He looked at me with a compassionate but powerful gaze, called me nearer and gave me a short yet divinely potent *mantra*. Then he asked me to go and repeat it for one hour at the Samadhi of Bhagwan Nityananda. I went to the Samadhi and sat in a quiet corner, closed my eyes and started repeating the holy name. When my eyes opened again, I found to my surprise that exactly an hour had passed by. I was in a state of ecstasy and felt like sitting longer. But in accordance with Baba's orders I returned to the Ashram. Baba was sitting in the garden under a *Bel* tree. He looked at me with a loving but questioning eyes as if asking 'what happened?'. I told him that my back was paining, my head was heavy and I had a desire to sit longer for meditation. Baba seemed pleased at my words and graciously said with a smile that it all indicated that I had received *Shambhavi diksha* (the divine initiation) and that I would make swift spiritual progress.

This is how I was initiated in an easy offhand manner by my Gurudev, Swami Muktananda Paramhansa. No *dakshina* (gift) was asked, no special day fixed, no ceremony held. It opened up the avenues of eternal bliss for me.

YOGIC EXPERIENCES

On my return home, I continued meditation for an hour every day. After

four days, this period easily increased to two hours at a time by the grace of Sri Gurudev. On the sixth day, in meditation, I saw a bright blue flame. It would appear and disappear, and I felt like seeing it again and again. It was a very pleasant experience.

Thereafter, for about a year, I used to go to Sri Gurudev every week and he, too, enquired after my progress with the love of a mother. From December 1963, I started getting further yogic experiences such as tremor, sweating, numbness, feeling of ants moving on the body, sensation of needle-pricks on the body, rotation of the body at the waist and of neck, automatic performance of yogic postures unknown to me, etc. The brisk rotation of the neck used to scare me sometimes, but Baba always told me not to worry about it as it was only a part of the process called *Nādi-śuddhi* or purification of the nervous system. Later on, during further yogic processes, I used to laugh or cry loudly, slap myself, go into yogic *mudras* (gestures), automatically perform *pranayama* and *kumbhaka* (suspension of breath), hear *nāda* (divine sounds), sing, wallow, shout like birds or beasts, get filled to the brim with the love of God and Sri Gurudev, follow somebody, walk fast etc. Sometimes strange phenomenon would happen. For example, while eating, all of a sudden the eatables in the plate in front of me would look like filthy rubbish and I would get nausea, with no other alternative but to leave it half way. I would even get dirty smells.

I started staying in the Ashram in the hope that these strange experiences might stop in that atmosphere. But they happened there also. While sitting be-

fore Sri Gurudev, a sort of intoxication would come over me and due to the sudden working of the divine force in me, I would produce sounds of various animals, or the *asanas* would start in quick succession. Then Gurudev would scold me with motherly authority and to the surprise of others sitting around, these yogic processes would immediately stop and I would sit quietly as if nothing had happened.

In meditation I saw different colours in which Sri Gurudev's lustrous face would appear. The experience would throw me into wild ecstasy. I would feel like sacrificing everything for the sake of Sri Gurudev. My throat would get choked and my eyes closed due to extreme love. I would rush to Sri Gurudev and embrace him or hold his feet fast.

Sometimes I felt as if I myself was Bhagwan Nityananda, so much so, that my yogic postures at that time would be like those of his. At other times, the state of intoxication was so intense that I would feel as if I was everything.

On account of the holy proximity of Sri Gurudev, even the beautiful surrounding garden of the Ashram has become so potent with his Shakti that for a *sadhaka* there is no need to do severe and austere *sadhana* there. Sit anywhere in the garden and you will feel calm and contented. This garden was my resort at times. While watering the plants or collecting dry leaves and twigs, the Shakti would suddenly rise in me and make me feel extra-ordinarily energetic. I would be ready to do all sorts of work in the Ashram and no matter what amount of work I did I knew no fatigue.

The 21st of February 1963 marks an

eventful day in my diary. That morning with a garland in hand I was waiting with other devotees in the hall, when with a sudden urge I rushed to the meditation chamber of Sri Gurudev. The door was closed. I stood outside, sobbing like a child for his *darshan* and saying गुरुः साक्षात् परब्रह्मा तस्मै श्री गुरुवे नमः । (I bow down to the Guru who is the Parabrahma in visible form). Sri Gurudev very kindly opened the door. I peeped in and what a surprise! I saw him in the form of Lord Dattatreya. It was a thrilling experience and my eyes welled up with tears of joy and I garlanded him with trembling hands. Then I held his feet and prayed that the only blessing I wanted was that I should never forget those lotus feet. Sri Gurudev became his usual self again, blessed me smilingly and with a loving look in his eyes asked me to calm down. I went away happy, moved by the greatness and kindness of Sri Gurudev.

I have also seen him in the form of Lord Sri Krishna. It was evening time and as usual we were all standing for our evening prayer, in the hall, when I casually glanced at Sri Gurudev who was sitting in his chair. To my great surprise there he was in the form of Lord Sri Krishna, in all his finery. I could not remove my eyes from that lovely face. In a little while, Sri Gurudev again became his usual self. In this way, the omnipotent Gurudev fulfils the desires of his devotees and shows them that in him are embodied all other deities.

I find that now I am getting quieter every day. The various experiences through which I have passed have probably purified me sufficiently and that Sri Gurudev has very kindly calmed

me down so that I can now enjoy undisturbed meditation for hours. The yogic movements have now stopped but in meditation sometimes I see vast ocean, mountains, rivers, trees, forts, temples, flags and so on. Besides, passions like anger, greed, attachment are slowly disappearing.

MY WIFE IS BLESSED BY SRI GURUDEV

Not only the course of my sadhana has become smooth, but even my family life has become happy, as my wife too is blessed by Sri Gurudev.

It so happened that one day she accompanied me to the Ashram. She liked the place and experienced inner contentment. She started worshipping Sri Gurudev.

One night, while she was bowing before Sri Gurudev's photograph, her eyelids were tightly closed and a bright light appeared before her closed eyes in which she saw swans, horses, birds etc. She had to sit down. As she sat her body started rotating at the waist. She was frightened at this strange experience but from the next day she started going into a state of deep meditation. Sri Gurudev was very happy to hear these developments, and smilingly said, "Everything will be all right. Shakti imparted to you has passed on to her".

My wife started visiting the Ashram more often. Her experiences were almost identical with mine. Whenever she visited the Ashram, she felt delighted and very energetic. She experienced severe pain at the base of the spine,

between the eyebrows and in the chest. Sometimes she felt that her body had become light like a feather and that she was floating in the air. She saw lights of different colours in which she had visions of Bhagwan Nityananda and also of Sri Gurudev. She also had visions of various deities sitting on lotuses.

Soon after this, while performing *puja* she would lose her body-consciousness and go into a state akin to deep sleep. In this state, which lasts for two to three hours, she sees different visions, hears devotional songs and also hears discourses which she cannot later remember. In the beginning all this caused her difficulty in carrying out the daily routine work, but soon things became smooth and easy.

My wife is not educated but Baba has been kind to both of us. Does this not prove that a person need not necessarily be educated or highly intelligent to receive Sri Gurudev's grace? It is our experience that love and faith are the two factors that propel us on the path divine.

I have no words to express my gratitude for what Sri Gurudev has done for us. How can I ever praise or sing adequately the glory of such an omnipotent, omniscient Sadguru?

अनंत जन्मीची पुण्याई । तेणेचि भेटली सदुस्माई ।
परम आनंद दिवला जिणें । स्वानुभवेचि तो चाखणें ॥

(It is due to the merits of innumerable past births that I met Sri Gurudev. He has given me joy beyond words. It has to be experienced, to be believed).



FROM A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN TO DIVINE BLISS

by Smt. KAILASH PRATAP (NEW DELHI)

Yes, that is the story I am going to tell—from an imminent nervous breakdown to divine bliss.

The strain of building a house and my habit of worrying had brought me to the verge of a mental and physical break-down last year. I needed a change badly. My brother happened to come from Bombay. Seeing my condition he suggested that I should immediately go and spend a few days in Swami Muktananda Paramhansa's Ashram at Ganeshpuri.

I was astonished at this suggestion coming from him, as we had known him to be very sceptical of saints and religion. He told me that he had been for some time regularly visiting that saint and as a result of his influence he no longer took tranquillizers and sleeping pills. The tension and worries from which he had suffered for years and which had even brought on a severe heart attack had now disappeared.

Since I had been keenly interested in spiritual matters for the last few years, I welcomed the suggestion and left for Ganeshpuri soon afterwards.

MY FIRST IMPRESSION

When I arrived at Shree Gurudev Ashram I found Baba Muktanandaji sitting in a hall with some people around him. He would make casual enquiries from those who came in and for the rest of the time he would sit silently and so did the audience. Everything

including Baba himself did not seem out of ordinary. I thought to myself that I was going to be terribly bored there. I wondered how I would spend two weeks in that place with no other diversion.

Next day as I sat in Baba's presence a strange feeling of peace and contentment filled me. On the first day I had asked Baba a few questions but now that desire completely left me. I sat there doing nothing, thinking nothing and desiring nothing; just happy and contented with myself. All seemed to be well with the world.

My youngest child was sick and I was worried about her when I left Delhi but here no thought of home or children would enter my mind. Sitting near Babaji, now and then my eyes would close and my mind get drawn within. I went into deep meditation without any effort on my part. The presence of other people in the hall, some of them coming or going or even talking to Baba did not bother me. I felt more and more drawn towards him just like a needle towards a magnet. He radiated tranquillity and joy, and my being had been thirsty for it—as if for ages. No wonder therefore that my soul was irresistibly attracted towards him.

One morning when I went into the hall Baba asked me to read two books, *Devātma Shakti* and *Yogavāṇī*. I noticed that both these books dealt with Kundalini Yoga and Shaktipat.

I had been there four or five days

when I started feeling some sensation at the bottom of my spinal column, and then movements like jumping of a frog in my abdomen. Sometimes a wave-like sensation would go up and down my spine especially while meditating. According to my initiation about a year earlier, my chosen ideal was Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa and I used to meditate on him and repeat his *mantra*. Now when I would sit for meditation and repeat the same *mantra*, Bhagwan Nityananda's (Baba's Guru) vision would come before my eyes. One day I had a vision of various gods and goddesses. It passed like a film across my closed eyes. I did not understand what all this meant and being shy neither did I ask anyone. One day a professor came to the Ashram. He was interested in Yoga and had been practising it on his own for some years. He seemed a genuine seeker. Someone had told him that what he was looking for he would find in Ganeshpuri and he came there. Baba made him sit near his chair and pressed his thumb on the spot between his eyebrows. He immediately went into deep meditation for two hours without being disturbed by activities in the hall. Next morning Baba made him sit in his meditation room. When he came out and related his experience, to my great surprise I found that it coincided with mine. He was told that his Kundalini had been awakened by Baba's grace.

So that was it! But it was too good to believe! I had read that it was a very rare achievement. It happened through the grace of a Siddha Guru to a deserving disciple. But how did I, a very ordinary human being with all the weaknesses and faults, deserve this great Master's grace! The only answer

I could find was that these divine masters' compassion is as infinite as God's. One has only to have a keen desire to reach out a feeble hand towards the Master. In great kindness the Master takes that hand, unclear though it may be. Thus I too a 'seeking sinner' at last met my 'seeking saviour'.

CHANGES THAT FOLLOWED

Next morning when I got up, I had an irresistible urge to go and prostrate at my Master's feet. I did that and he blessed me. From then onwards my heart was filled with deep devotion to God and my Guru, my whole being was enveloped in bliss and intoxication. With everyday that passed, the devotion, bliss and joy increased. At times I felt that my heart could not contain anymore, it would burst!

Having been already initiated, I had in the beginning a conflict in my mind. Was it right to change one's Guru? If not, what should be my relationship with Baba, for whom I had acquired intense love and respect? I discussed it with Amma who explained that *Guru-tattwa* is one and thus there is essentially no difference in the various Gurus. But one's own experience is the best criterion to recognise a true Guru. One day I asked Babaji if all the great saints such as Sri Ramakrishna, Raman Maharshi and Bhagwan Nityananda were the same. He said, "Yes, they are all one, they are the different forms of the same Divine manifestation. At different times and places they do the same work."

Though it had all been explained, yet the doubt got finally and fully resolved when I had my spiritual experience of Shaktipat. My previous Guru and my *Iṣṭa Devatā* got automatically merged

in my new Sadguru. I found no difference between Sri Ramakrishna and Baba. The only difference was that while previously I used to imagine my *Iṣṭa Devatā's* form and get guidance from his books, now he was in person before me. Perhaps that was my need at this stage. God knew it and fulfilled it.

Another great change that took place in me was that the habit of worrying which had become chronic, and for which I had been visiting psychiatrists, disappeared completely. The constant feeling of discontentment—another disease from which I had suffered all my life, no matter how many material comforts I had—was also now gone. It was replaced by a feeling of fulfilment as if my being had found what it had always been seeking.

The change continued even after I came back home. I still lived in a state of blissful intoxication. My devotion was on the increase, I would sing devotional songs day and night. For the first time in my life I was inspired even to write some. These came spontaneously to me—another miracle of the awakened Kundalini! My memory improved tremendously. All the unnecessary activities such as parties, movies, clubs, visiting people, gossiping and arguing, dropped off automatically. On the other hand my interest increased in the essential duties such as looking after my house and family and study of religious scriptures. At my Gurudev's suggestion I started cooking for the family and found pleasure in it. My husband specially complimented me on the efficiency with which I performed my duties. I did far more work now than I had ever done before. But the strange thing was that I felt that I was

doing all this work with not even ten per cent of my mind because more than ninety per cent of it would remain on God all the time. It was surprising how devotion, meditation, *prāṇāyāma*, *japa*, detachment and selfless work which I had found so difficult to achieve by my own efforts now came effortlessly. They became part of my life, the very purpose of my existence.

Physical changes also started taking place, besides the mental and emotional. I was told that Kundalini Shakti when awakened throws out the chronic diseases and thus purifies the body. On my return I started having frequent attacks of pharyngitis (throat trouble) and severe headaches from which I had suffered for years. However, these attacks would subside without the aid of any medicines. These became milder and milder and then disappeared completely.

HARMONY BETWEEN FAMILY LIFE AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

I feel that at times due to my intense devotion to the Guru I get extremely detached from the family. On such occasions, my Master at once controls it from within. He has always helped me to maintain harmony between my family life and spiritual life. I remember one incident. Last year I was looking forward to the December holidays, when I could go and spend a few days at the lotus feet of my Master. My longing increased every day and I became more and more impatient to go there. My husband suggested that after the children's examinations we should take them out for a holiday to some place they liked. It was out of question for me—beyond my power to do so—how ever much I loved my children. I could

go to no other place but Ganeshpuri. My whole being was longing for it.

Babaji had gone to Hyderabad for a few weeks. I wrote to him asking whether I should go there or to Ganeshpuri if he was returning soon. He wrote back that I should go to the latter in January. It was a shock for me and I almost collapsed. How could I wait till then! I cried bitterly. And then an unbelievable thing happened. My longing to go to Baba subsided immediately as if he had withdrawn it from within. A desire arose to take the children to a place of their choice for a good holiday. They had worked hard for their exams and needed the change. I began to feel that it was selfish of me to have wanted to go alone. We took them to Simla for the winter sports and we all thoroughly enjoyed it.

Baba also insists upon his disciples performing their worldly duties with perfection. Last July I had gone to Ganeshpuri to be present on *Gurupurnimā* day and my husband came there for the weekend. On Sunday morning after attending the *ārti* I sat down for meditation. Baba at once commanded me to go and attend to my husband's breakfast, even though there was a servant. When after breakfast we both came together he felt pleased. He has in no

way let any inconvenience or disharmony come into my family life due to the great inner change in me. On the other hand, there has been more harmony, more efficiency and more happiness in our home.

Another thing Baba is particular about is that both husband and wife should be interested in spiritual life. It has happened in the case of all his devotees that when one of the partners starts going to him, he soon attracts the other too. My husband has now acquired so much love and reverence for Baba that during the past year he has visited Ganeshpuri more times than I have. His devotion has developed without any effort on my part, though I had wished it.

It is more than a year since I first visited Ganeshpuri. When I look back I find as if I have had a new birth. Though apparently life goes on as before, yet within me everything has changed. It is no longer a dry, tense and lonely existence. Life has become sweet like nectar, exceedingly lovable, because the thought of the Beloved is there all the time.

My salutations again and again to my great Master, Swami Muktananda Paramhansa, who has given me this new life and to whom I am indebted for ever.

*Within thy home is the treasure,
there is nought without ;*

*By the Guru's grace, to it thou
attainest and the door
opens unto thee.*

—Guru Nanak

SADHANA AT THE FEET OF A SADGURU

by Smt. PRATIBHA TRIVEDI

Questions are often asked by many about the spiritual practices followed in Shree Gurudev Ashram. They are surprised to see the inmates of the Ashram carrying on their normal daily duties without appearing to practise common spiritual disciplines. They often ask questions like "How long do you sit for meditation? How many times do you repeat your mantra every day? What rituals do you observe? What religious books do you read?" and so on. An attempt is made here to explain the nature of the sadhana practised by the inmates of the Ashram and also by other sadhakas under the infallible guidance of our Gurudev, Swami Muktananda Paramhansa. Not only is he an adept in the science of Kundalini-Mahayoga, not only has he the rare power of giving Shaktipat-diksha, but he is also a Sadguru who constantly leads those who place complete reliance on him on to their spiritual goal—in the manner explained in this article.

NECESSITY OF A GURU

Among all the ways and means of attaining self-realisation, the highest goal of human life the sadhana practised at the feet of a Sadguru is the surest and the best, as here one gets direct guidance from God through Sadguru, while in other paths the aspirant proceeds according to his own limited understanding. A quicker and an easier way of attaining the spiritual goal

within the short span of a human life can only be learnt from a Guru; but then he has to be capable enough to guide his disciples, who have put their whole-hearted trust in him, to the fulfilment of their highest aim. It is rare to find such a Guru because even among the spiritual men every one is not qualified to be a Guru. A true Guru is not a self-styled Guru like some of the so-called Gurus, but "he is a supremely qualified and divinely appointed Master to impart his own experience of self-realisation to the deserving." This authorisation may also come to him from his own Guru by the Divine Will. Thus he becomes a true representative of God.

In truth, the real Guru is Parabrahman—the Absolute Being, who is omnipresent and eternal. But He is not visible to the human eyes. Therefore, out of compassion, to guide the sincere seekers, He manifests Himself in a visible human form which is capable of holding the infinite power of His Divinity. This is necessary because in the initial stages the spiritual aspirants do not have the capacity to establish direct contact with the Absolute. In order to prepare the ground in them to receive the Divine Knowledge, the aspirants have to pass through a course of spiritual discipline, and during that period, the mediation and benevolent protection of a Guru is absolutely necessary. On the one hand there is immaturity of the human mind, body and intellect, and on the other

there is the most subtle mystery of that eternal and unfathomable Reality. Between the two a link, a Guru, is required through whose help the Divine can gradually manifest in the aspirant.

An aspirant, not knowing what he has done in the past and where he stands at present and also not having a clear idea of the nature of the goal to be attained, follows a certain discipline according to his own ideas of austerities and rituals, and the learning acquired from reading books or hearing lectures. He is even apt to mistake the ego-satisfying promptings as inner spiritual guidance. And when he does not get the results as expected, being frustrated, he goes on changing the course of his discipline or is urged to move from one place to another in search of a way to the goal. But a Guru who has attained Perfection and is in constant communion with the Divine can see through an aspirant, know his past and judge his present spiritual status. Therefore he properly guides the aspirant according to his nature, circumstances and competency, by giving him a spiritual push on the path through his divine power which smoothenes the course of discipline and makes the spiritual ideal real and living for the aspirant.

Thus without a Guru it is impossible to proceed far on the spiritual path. Not a single enlightened soul will ever deny the necessity of a Guru. Those who do so are nourishing their ego in the darkness of their ignorance, because to accept a Guru, the ruthless killer of one's ego, is contrary to their self-conceited ideas.

FINDING A GURU

"How to recognise a Guru?" is the question that often arises in the minds

of the sincere aspirants who desire to find a Guru. In the present age of rationalism if we are to measure up a Guru with the yardstick of the intellect, we are not likely to be successful. The truth is that being fed up by the pains and pleasures undergone in the past births, a man's soul awakens, as it were, from the slumber and the merits of his past lives create a keen desire in his heart to seek eternal happiness. When his restlessness to attain the goal increases, God takes pity on him and blesses him by contriving for him to come across a Guru.

A real Sadguru is one who, having reached the state which is beyond words and mind, has attained oneness with God. Therefore he cannot be judged or recognised by worldly standards. Like God, Sadguru too defies description. Sadguru is not the physical body made of flesh and blood that we see with our eyes, but he is the living manifestation of the unmanifest Divine Being. Thus the true divine nature of Sadguru is extraordinary, invisible and beyond imagination. The God-like qualities of Sadguru remain unknown, unless he himself wishes them to be known. They alone come to know his true greatness to whom he reveals himself.

Notwithstanding this, we may say that one's own experience of a Guru is the best criterion to recognise him, and the first step towards it is that one must meet him often and be with him. *At whose sight the heart is filled with joy; in whose presence the mind gives up its wavering and worrying nature and the intellect acquires the conviction which gives inner satisfaction; at whose remembrance the whole being is charged with a new energy; in whose*

company spiritual thirst begins to be quenched; after meeting whom contentment is experienced even in the midst of unhappy circumstances and one has the feeling of having found something precious which was missing so far, under whose influence many new things are revealed about spiritual science—such is a true Guru. One begins to love him without any apparent cause, remembers him constantly, feels an irresistible pull towards him, often wishes to be in his company and would like to please him in every way. One has not to make an effort to trust him, but faith towards him is born in one's heart. The Guru is one who inspires faith, whose godly qualities make an impression and whose spiritual influence makes itself felt by the seeker. Such a Guru is easily recognised. Receiving the spiritual impact from him marks the commencement of a relationship between the Guru and the disciple, and the Guru has his own way of establishing it with each of his disciples.

SURRENDER

To accept a Guru means to surrender at his feet. To become a disciple in this sense does not require any outward ceremony. A real Guru does not attach any importance to it but penetrates through the inner being of the disciple and evaluates the degree of his inner surrender. He observes and tests the capacity and willingness of the disciple to abide by his words. The path of the Master is the spiritual discipline of self-surrender. It is not easy to put faith in and surrender everything to the unseen and formless God. But once having seen God in Guru, surrender becomes feasible and gives joy to the

disciple. The surrender on the part of the disciple has to be spontaneous. The feeling of gratitude towards the Guru for what has been received from him, makes the surrender not only easy but natural and happy.

Spiritual discipline practised at the feet of a Guru, is a kind of sacrifice, in which the aspirant has to make a complete offering of his own individuality. He has to muster his varied instincts and feelings running hither and thither in different directions, and to offer them continuously in that sacrifice. The Guru considers this as a most valuable gift offered to him. The Guru demands everything from the disciple, so that he can give all he possesses. The surrender has to be in actual practice so that it may bring a complete transformation in the disciple. Merely verbal or mental decision to surrender has no meaning. The way of the Master is the way of direct experience. It does not require the performance of rituals or learning of the scriptures. In it the words of the Guru are the scriptures and his *līlās* (ways) are the principles. Commands of the Guru are greater than the scriptures, and the experience got thereby is the Truth.

The debt which a disciple owes to his Guru for receiving his invaluable grace can only be repaid through devotion and service to him. Knowing the likes and dislikes of the Guru, to adapt oneself to his ways accordingly is the real service rendered to him. To have full faith in his words at all times and places is real devotion. Single-pointed and steadfast devotion towards the Guru, has such a potency that without practising any kind of other discipline or without having any knowledge of the scriptures, a disciple attains his goal.

There are Gurus who, without making their disciples undergo the hardships of discipline, liberate them from bondage by the sheer power of their divine grace. Only the omniscient great saints have this divine authority to elevate their disciples in such a manner. The real Guru is one who liberates him who completely relies on him, by giving him courage and an assurance of protection like Lord Krishna telling Arjuna :

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

(abandoning all activity take refuge only in Me. I will redeem you from all sins, grieve not) and also gives him the direct experience of His promise. Having assumed the responsibility of the disciple, the Guru expects unflinching faith and complete surrender from him. In this path the disciple has to remain obedient, simple, chaste and upright. Beyond this no other active spiritual practice is required. It is the Guru who conducts his sadhana, removes the obstacles and gives liberation. The only active work that he has to do is to follow diligently the commands of the Guru. For such a disciple carrying out the normal daily activities is in itself the worship of the Guru. The disciple's mental agitation, reliance on his own independent efforts, self-consciousness, self-assertion etc. obstruct the working of the Divine Shakti of the Guru in him. Mentally he has to remain calm and tranquil. But this does not mean that he should be light-hearted and easy-going. There should be seriousness of purpose and earnestness of endeavour.

It is not easy to practise such a sadhana under a Guru. It requires great patience and persistence. One whose individuality is strong finds it difficult in the beginning to surrender. Besides one who has no knowledge or experience of such discipline will consider this inertia dangerous in spiritual life. Since this sadhana is not for all, it varies according to the ability of different disciples and the Guru instructs them to suit their individual preparedness.

FAITH

One of the most important requirements of this path is faith. Freedom from any doubt towards the Guru is faith. Hence, it is necessary to have a complete understanding of the Guru's true nature, his mission and his methods of working. If one lacks this knowledge, occasions may arise when one's faith is likely to be shaken. The Guru who is self-realised and has attained oneness with Parabrahman is a complete renunciate and a great *tapasvi*. Material comforts come his way without seeking which he, however, seems to enjoy for the sake of others as occasion demands. Mysterious are the ways of a Guru. His *karmas* are like burnt up seeds which do not sprout again, so he is not bound by any kinds of actions he may do. He is therefore above all kinds of laws. There are no precepts and prohibitions for him. What he does is the precept and what he does not do is prohibition for him. Therefore his actions are not to be doubted by applying to it the common standards of the world. No change should occur in one's love and faith towards the Guru under any circumstance. There is always a purpose behind his actions, but he seldom gives any explanation for

what he does. Since his actions are not easily understood one should look upon them as his *līlā* (sport).

The Guru takes his disciple further on the spiritual path by making him fulfil the obligations of his past and present lives and also what is ordained for him in his destiny. Therefore a disciple should not entreat his guru to remove his physical troubles or worldly difficulties. Usually the Guru does not interfere with anyone's destiny which is determined by the past *karmas*. By giving him the strength to endure the adversities and a protecting hand whenever necessary, he saves the disciple from the misery of a rebirth. Therefore at the time of trouble and distress in the life of the disciple, the Guru remains unmoved as a witness to everything, although he knows what the disciple is passing through and is capable of removing his affliction. Under such circumstances a disciple has to remain patient. Patience is but another name of faith. Those whose faith fluctuates cannot make good progress on the path. Although the disciple has received much from the Guru, at the time when he experiences misery and unhappiness in life, if his faith is lost, his intellect becomes unsteady and the light of the truth within him becomes dim.

To have faith in the Guru means to recognise his complete authority over oneself. After dedicating everything at the feet of the Guru one has to remain calm and relaxed. Then the Guru takes full charge of one's life. The Guru's treatment of and behaviour towards a disciple is commensurate with the latter's faith, love and understanding towards the Guru. Naturally on the part of the Guru actions and reactions are spontaneous. The only string that ties

the Guru and the disciple together is the disciple's faith in the Guru. If the faith is slackened, the tie gets loose. One's own thoughts rebound on oneself. Therefore, whatever may seem as the human failings or limitations of the Guru, a disciple is enjoined to see only the Divine in him, because by doing so he contacts God through Guru.

True surrender is that which ensures an un-interrupted continuity of spiritual progress. Surrender is strengthened by faith. When there are no doubts, unjust thoughts and egoistic tendencies in the disciple, he experiences happiness in surrender; but doubts bring slackness in his enthusiasm, misapprehension causes depression in his spirit and distrust makes his intellect unsteady. It is very necessary to have a decisive mind in spiritual discipline, because where there is resolution, there is patience. Imagination raises doubts in the mind while discretion helps determination. Pondering over the words of the Guru and having testified them by his own experience, the disciple's mind becomes free of doubts and he is able to take decision. Lastly if he retains faith, enthusiasm and steadiness while practising surrender on the spiritual path, the inner contentment obtained through Guru's grace remains stable.

EGO-ANNIHILATION

Having stabilised the disciple on the spiritual path the Guru makes him pass through varied trials to test the degree of his inner submission, tenacity, patience and obedience. Unless he has thoroughly and effectively put him to test the real Guru will never give the experience of his own realisation to the disciple. The Guru may test his faith

and forbearance when he is allotted the work he dislikes or when he is placed under adverse circumstances. He watches his reaction on occasions which incite his jealousy or invite criticism of his faults. He closely observes the working of the disciple's ego when he is insulted or praised, respected or is being neglected. The aim of the Guru in testing is to completely annihilate the ego of the disciple, so that the Divine Light can shine unobstructed from within. Besides, this way the relationship between the Guru and the disciple gets firmly established.

For the annihilation of ego the Guru's methods are more effective than any other spiritual discipline, because he can see through an aspirant and know the nature of obstacles that handicap his spiritual progress. The Guru's dealings are according to the disciple's capacity to endure, understand and reform. The disciple has to bear the pains of a new birth. From a narrow individual consciousness he has to pass into the all-pervading divine consciousness. To bring about this transformation in him the Guru works with endless patience. The disciple may grow impatient or weary but never the Guru, because human nature is such that the moment something contrary comes up to it, it immediately resists. In spiritual training, one gets from the Guru what one needs rather than what one wishes for. One cannot dictate any terms or make a sort of contract with the Guru.

A conflict between the ego and spiritual values is bound to arise, and the knot of ego is not easy to untie. It is one of the greatest obstacles in the discipline of surrender. When, where and in what form the ego will come up nobody can know, because it has many

forms such as the ego of work, body, Guru's favour, knowledge, humility or even the ego of considering oneself superior to others in spiritual attainment. The forms of ego are very subtle and the Guru often pokes at the ego-worm which lurks within the disciple working in a very tricky way. The Guru touches his sensitiveness by which the disciple feels himself exposed and this upsets him. At such times he has to use prudence and make an effort to remain above any reaction. He has to give his consent and active co-operation to the Guru who tries to bring about an inner transformation in him. It is not enough to remain passive in the presence of the Guru, but he has to submit himself voluntarily to his will. Such sustained efforts will ultimately lead him to the effortless state of inner freedom beyond action and reaction.

The Guru is a hard task-master because his aim is to make his disciple achieve his goal during his lifetime. He does not like the energy of his disciple to be frittered away in other pursuits. So he corrects him at every step and nothing escapes his notice to do so. He is a diligent observer of his disciple's thoughts and actions. He does not tolerate any indolence, inconsistency, untruth, ignorance etc. on the part of the disciple. He has his own ways and methods to make the disciple conscious of his weaknesses and faults such as jealousy, greed, falsehood, disobedience, moral digression etc., which may create a sense of guilt or of sin and fill him with a strong sense of impurity or incapacity. Instead of being obsessed and depressed by these defects he should try to overcome them, remembering that they are universal and not exclusively his or dedicate them at Guru's feet con-

sidering them as separate entities from himself. As he grows in surrender they slowly disappear. The Guru teaches him surrender at every step till with the passage of time it becomes natural with him.

Although a hard task-mater, the Guru is always extremely compassionate. He is like a mother when approached with childlike simplicity, but his love surpasses the soft sympathies of one's own mother. He protects his disciple and at times even puts up with his faults. His love remains unchanged. He never abandons his disciples nor does he allow the disciple to break away from him.

This kind of sadhana practised at the feet of a Guru is a long *tapasyā*, which may well last a lifetime. So long as the relationship of the Guru and the disciple exists, it continues, no matter what spiritual state the disciple may have attained.

VIGILANT PATIENCE

One who wants to accept a Guru, must also know how to become a disciple. If he wishes to find genuine qualities in a Guru, he must also possess the qualities necessary for a disciple. There are some disciples who understand the ways, aim and intentions of the Guru without being told about them by the Guru in any way; there are others to whom the Guru gives indications, suggestions or signs to convey his wish; and there are still others to whom he has to make things clear by words. It is the duty of a good disciple to always act, by using his subtle intellect, in accordance with the unexpressed wishes of the Guru. The Guru incessantly works to reform the disciple of his intellectual mistakes, wayward

mental tendencies and sentimental bad habits which may have settled in him since a long time, even from the past births. For such subtle work the Guru's ways and methods are also subtle and varied. Therefore, in the beginning, unbelievable and confusing problems arise before the disciple. At such times, without giving expression to them through words or without jumping to any hasty conclusion he has to remain quiet and patient. With the passing of time and with an increasing realisation of truth these problems are automatically and easily solved. Besides it is the way of looking at the problem that makes the problem difficult. The disciple must not forget that now he has to change the whole pattern of thinking. He should not try to fit the teachings and working of the Guru into his old way of thinking. He has to be open-minded.

The Guru being aware of the confusion in the mind of the disciple, solves his doubts in very characteristic ways, and to grasp and understand the Guru's indirect suggestions, the disciple has to be vigilant. As the Guru works from the level of the disciple's capacity to understand, he uses different methods with each one. The disciple always has to be on the alert to catch the real meaning behind Guru's actions as well as the words which may be ambiguous and confusing or even appear to be contradictory. Sometimes the Guru does not give a straight answer when asked about a problem or he may avoid the issue altogether. The Guru always wants the disciple to solve his own problem by himself and thereby develop his power of understanding, discrimination and taking independent decisions; and in that matter he will get an indi-

cation of Guru's approval or disapproval. The disciple should not, therefore, rely on the Guru's verbal instructions or clarifications alone, but on the inner help and guidance which he gets when he is in tune with the Guru.

Another thing to be remembered by a disciple is that he should not try to measure or find out the nature of his spiritual progress. Being yet unprepared to solve the higher mysteries, such an effort is useless and if made, it will mislead him and retard his progress. He will get dejected thinking that so far he has not achieved anything and the time has been spent in vain. Such thoughts shake his faith. Although he may not have direct experience, the spiritual influence of the Guru always remains active in him. It works in a very subtle way. In the beginning the disciple may not know about it. But after sometime, from the transformation taking place at different levels of his being he can understand it. If he has faith in the Guru and is constantly aware of the spiritual goal to be reached, the time-factor is unimportant. He has not to lose patience. Perfection presupposes great penance (*tapasyā*). Without it the knowledge received does not mature, and the inner changes do not stabilise. By making the disciple perform penance, the Guru purifies him by removing obstacles like attachment, infatuation, ignorance, likes and dislikes etc. Only when all aims, ideals and desires in worldly life become unimportant, progress in spiritual life can be hoped for. Therefore intensity in spiritual discipline is desirable, but not impatience. The Guru's delays are not his denials. The Guru makes the disciple mature gradually. He moulds him into a new personality. It is a long

process. Hence the disciple should proceed on the path shown by the Guru, peacefully and with full trust in the infallibility of Guru's grace.

FULFILMENT THROUGH LOVE

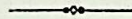
Although this sadhana may seem hard yet for one who has developed intense love for the Guru it becomes not only easy but a source of joy and happiness. Every penance that he performs or the hardship he faces on the spiritual path shown by the Guru falls on him very lightly and he remains cheerful with a happy attitude towards all things, because his earnest desire is to please the Guru and obtain his love and grace. Surrendering everything at the feet of the Guru without slightest hesitation or reservation, he becomes a true *sannyāsin*, a renunciate. He desires no worldly help or protection. He lives in faith and demands nothing from the Guru because he knows that what is necessary is being done and will be done. Without any reluctance he carries out all kinds of responsible work assigned to him, with enthusiasm and skill.

A true disciple merges his desires into the wishes of his Guru. He does not even desire salvation. Being completely devoted to the Guru in this manner, he experiences oneness with him and feels that whatever work he does is done by the Guru. He is only an instrument. He remains unaffected under any circumstance, knowing that all is Guru's play in which he also plays a part. In his life the Guru becomes the centre of all his movements, thoughts and words. Then he sees everything merged into the Guru with the result that, as described by our Gurudev in the *Guru-prema-mrita*, "there does not remain in him any idea of distinction or duality like

love and hate, mine and thine, small or great etc. This is the state of absolute non-duality through love for the Guru. Being thus established in oneness with the Guru, the separate existence of the devotee disappears altogether, removing all his ego. When ego and pride thus disappear, he while merging in the sweet love of the Guru so closely embraces him that—at that very moment, like the mixing of a wave with the ocean—his soul gets united with that of his Guru to become indivisibly one. This is like air and the space. It is dif-

ficult to distinguish and tell : this is air and that is space. Likewise when the devotee and the Guru get spiritually united all distinctions and inequalities are destroyed. This way the differences having come to an end, an unbroken flow of Supreme Joy alone remains. The devotee becomes an embodiment of Eternal Bliss."

Thus the sincere disciple achieves his goal by his true love and complete surrender at the lotus feet of the Guru. This is the safest and the shortest path to achieve the Highest Bliss, the only true aim of human life.



*Rabia sick upon bed
By two saints was visited,
Holy Malik, Hassan wise
Men of mark in Muslim eyes
Hasan said, "Whose prayer is pure,
Will God's chastisements endure."
Malik, from a deeper sense
Uttered his experience,
"He who loves his Master's choice
Will in chastisement rejoice".
Rabia saw some selfish will
In their maxims lingering still,
And replied, "O men of grace
He who sees his Master's face
Will not in his prayers recall
That he is chastised at all."*

THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF THE GURU

by ARTHUR OSBORNE (TIRUVANNAMALAI)

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Man's mind is poised between the Spirit and the outer world which reflects the Spirit. Turned inwards, it receives intuitions of the Spirit, turned outwards, it receives sense data of the manifested world.

That is how it should be, but in fact it is apt to become engrossed in the outer world, according to it a fictitious reality and forgetting that it is a manifestation of the Spirit. That leads to its forgetting the truth of the Spirit and becoming obtuse on the inward side through which spiritual influence should flow. Therefore the Spirit, unable to penetrate directly through the inward side, manifests outwardly in order to attract the attention of the mind and turn it inwards. This outward manifestation is the Guru. The Tamil poet-saint Tayumanavar refers to the Guru as a decoy: "Eating and sleeping, suffering and enjoying, bearing a name and having a place of birth, it appeared as the Silent Guru, like a deer used to decoy other deer." Understood thus, whatever serves to proclaim the reality of the Spirit to a man and to turn his mind inwards can be called a Guru: and in this sense the Sage Dattatreya could say that he had many gurus.

Those rare persons who are already near to spiritual awakening can be illumined by the Inner Light acting directly with no outer agency, and for them,

as the Maharshi said, no outer Guru is necessary. For those who come near to this, reminders coming from natural forces, creatures and episodes may spark the illumination, as Dattatreya indicated. For most people, however, the Guru takes the form of an outer individual—a deer used to decoy other deer.

This indicates the need for a Guru and shows what his function is. For any to whom the Golden Gates do not open spontaneously and for whom some spiritual discipline is necessary in order to make him poor enough to pass through the eye of a needle, a Guru is necessary. And the function of the Guru is not primarily to teach him doctrine or theory. There is no doctrine or theory that cannot be learned from books; and yet a book does not normally act as a Guru. There was a time when doctrinal truths were normally kept secret or revealed only gradually, stage by stage. D. T. Suzuki quotes a Ch'an (Zen) Master as saying: "Ask of your self, inquire into your self, pursue your self, investigate within your self, and never let others tell you what it is, nor let it be explained in words."¹ Not only did he not give the disciple an explanation in words but he even forbade him to accept one if offered. This can be compared to an arithmetic master not telling his pupils the

answers to their sums until they have worked them out. There are some modern arithmetic books in which the answers are given at the end, but still the pupils have to work the sums out; the answers serve only to check whether they have done the work rightly or not. There is no merit in knowing the answers if you have not done the work. So it is with the expositions of doctrinal theory so easily obtainable nowadays. The *Chandogya Upanishad* goes even farther than the Ch'an Master whom Suzuki quotes, for there the Guru gives the pupils a wrong explanation to see which of them will be taken in by it and which will see through it and come back for a correction.

If follows, then, that the function of the Guru is not to expound doctrine. He may do this incidentally, but the expositions can be obtained just as well from books. This is what the Maharshi meant by saying that he taught in silence; not that he did not give expositions but that they were not his essential teaching. Some of his disciples never asked him any questions of doctrine at all—they knew all that before coming to him. In the compilations of question and answer which his Ashram has published² it will be seen that most of the questions are asked by visitors or newcomers. The real function of the Guru is to awaken a spiritual current in you and turn you inwards, impelling you on towards liberation from the illusion of the ego-self into the realization of universal Being.

This implies that the need for a Guru is not a specifically Hindu dogma and does not need to be illustrated by quotations from Hindu scriptures. It is a fact of nature as universal as physical

parenthood. What is, perhaps, specifically Hindu is the unequivocal equating of the Guru with God. As the Maharshi said, "God, Guru and Self are the same." This also, however, although concealed in most religions for contingent reasons, is a universal truth and is therefore capable of exposition outside the technical terminology of any tradition.

Being is. Once the illusion of a separate individual "me" is dissolved, this universal Being is felt as the sole reality of "me" and I call it "self". So long, however, as the psycho-somatic instrument appears to subsist as a real and separate entity I call it "me" and regard pure Being as other, that is as God. It is the same Being. It is only belief or disbelief in the reality of the illusory ego which makes pure Being appear to be God or Self. God or Self manifested outwardly in human form as a decoy to lead one back to the Formless Self is the Guru. Thus God, Guru and Self are One.

It is said in the *Upanishads* that he who knows Brahman is Brahman. For that matter, every one is, every cat and dog is, in the sense that there is no other than the One Self manifested in all beings. This is not pantheism. It does not mean that the sum total of all beings added together makes up God but that God manifests as all beings without ever ceasing to be the universal, Unmanifested Self. The nearest analogy (though all analogies are incomplete) is a dream, since all the dream creatures are manifestations of your mind, having no existence outside you, while you continue as you were, complete and unchanged, before, during and after the dream. Actually there never has been a doctrine of pantheism. The best defi-

inition of the term would probably be : "A western misinterpretation of Eastern doctrines."

The difference between the Guru or Realized Man and others is that the Guru is consciously identical with the Spirit, implying by the word "consciously" not merely theoretical understanding but the living awareness or experience by which one knows that one is a man. Even so, saying that the Guru is no different from God does not mean that he has the power of God. There is an important distinction made by the Sufis according to which a Realized Man cannot say "I am God" but can say "I am not other than God". The former saying might imply the supreme blasphemy, that the ego is the Self; the latter denies the existence of the ego. Illustrating the identity between the Realized Man and God there is another often used analogy, also imperfect but nevertheless significant: he is identical as the water in a tumbler is with that of the Niagara Falls—of the same substance but differing vastly in scope and power.

It is not only in his state of being but functionally also that the Guru is held to be not other than God. Supreme Being, as God, is the Source, Father or Creator of the individual. But in becoming individualized the creature loses his awareness of Identity. Then God materialises as Guru to lead him back to the Source or Father. This is the basis of the Christian doctrine of the Divinity of Christ and his Identity with the Father. It is no mere historical accident that Christ was Divine and One with the Father but the expression of a profound truth. Christ, as he himself said, is the way, and it is God who is the way back to God. So it is with the

Guru. Not only his state but his function is Divine. As the Maharshi often said, "the Guru is One". In however many different forms he may appear, it is the one spirit of divine Guidance wearing different masks.

This, of course, is giving its loftiest meaning to the term "Guru", implying one who is poised in constant conscious Identity with Universal Being and consciously performing a divine function. It was in this sense that the Maharshi always used the word. "The Guru is one who at all times abides in the profound depths of the Self. He never sees any difference between himself and others and is quite free from the idea that he is the Enlightened or Liberated One, while those around him are in darkness or the bondage of ignorance. His self-possession can never be shaken under any circumstances, and he is never perturbed."³

A Guru in this full and perfect sense is a very rare phenomenon. It follows therefore that many who function as gurus must have a lesser qualification. A guru may be simply one who has been initiated into that function as a priest has been ordained into the priesthood. A certain power and grace will flow through him, although he is not a realized man. Even though he is, the term "realized" may mean something very different from the constant state of conscious identity which the Maharshi and his followers imply by it; it may imply only spasmodic realization or the realization of some higher state of phenomenal being.

By the law of symbolism, every person one comes in contact with reflects some possibility within oneself; one's relations with him reflects one's inner economy, so to speak, that is the order-

ing and disposition of one's potentialities. Just as the outer Guru in the full and perfect sense of the word reflects the inner Guru or Self in the Heart, so the incomplete or imperfect guru reflects various potentialities in the disciple. He will transmit the spirit of guidance, but it may come through tainted by his individual qualities, like water flowing through an unclean pipe. The individual strain may not greatly weaken or corrupt the spirit of guidance but it may pervert it completely. In the Quran Allah is spoken of as He who guides aright and He who guides astray. To one with an anthropomorphic conception of God as a benevolent old man this would sound blasphemous, but once one conceives of God as pure impersonal Being it becomes obvious that both the out-going and the incoming tendencies express Him. From the universal viewpoint of the totality of a man's lives from the out-going into manifestation to the re-absorption into pure Being, like the simultaneous view of the whole course of a river seen from the air, the course of each lifetime fits into place; but from the point of view of the aspirant the wise choice of a guru in this lifetime is of vital urgency.

This raises the practical questions. How to avoid the false guru who misguides? How to find a true guru? How to distinguish the true from the false? How to recognize whether and to what extent a guru is potent for good? Or whether or to what extent he is realized? Unfortunately there is no guaranteed method. Things are not so easy. Knowledge of doctrinal theory is certainly no safeguard. It may afford protection against some errors but not against a false guru; there are cases of

people with impeccable theoretical grounding being led astray. The best safeguard is inner purity and sincerity, since inner qualities are reflected outwardly in the persons with whom one is brought in contact. Impure forces cannot gain a footing unless there is some ally in the citadel to give them entrance. But inner purity and sincerity are not easy of attainment; one in whom they were perfect would no longer need a guru.

If one does not have the rare blessing of meeting with a perfect Sage such as the Maharshi, it is better to let caution outweigh enthusiasm in accepting a guru, for the benefit that may accrue is less than the harm. On the side of benefit it is to be remembered that no one can lead others farther than he has gone himself, so that if the guide has not attained the Goal his disciples are not likely to either. On the other hand, faults of character are no less infectious than physical diseases. That is why Hindu Sages warn aspirants so insistently to seek the company of saints and to avoid the impure. And to the influence of his guru, for good or bad, a man is susceptible as to none other, since the relationship is one which invites such influence.

Of course, a guru who has not attained the supreme Goal may be wise and benevolent and a great aid to his disciples within his limitations, only not all are; there is a danger. So flattering is it to be regarded as a guru that even an ego which has been severely disciplined may rise up again and develop faults such as arrogance and hypocrisy, craving flattery, shouting down opposition or criticism or accepting praise which does not belong to him, allowing himself to be treated as what

he is not. That is the beginning of a decline which can be expected to grow steeper and to infect his followers. It is no use taking a guru unless one has implicit faith in him; and one should be very wary in bestowing implicit faith.

People are caught in a dilemma; on the one hand, a trustworthy guru is no longer easy to find, and on the other hand they believe that they have no hope of spiritual development without a guru. I will repeat what I have said elsewhere about the position of such people. "What is the predicament of those who, in our times, seek an authorised and realized guru and do not find one? As they look around they perceive, not in one channel but all, an aridity in the channels where Grace once flowed. They hear strident voices proclaiming themselves gurus but would do well to remember Christ's prediction that there would be false Christs and false prophets to deceive, if it were possible, even the elect. Christ's saying that he who seeks will find is a universal law, but a law must have some technique, some means of action; what is this in an age when the former lifelines to those struggling in the turbulent waters of samsara have been withdrawn or have rotted and become unfit to bear the weight of a man? Willing to follow an authorised and realized guru in any religion, they look around and do not see one."⁴

They must have implicit faith in God. The Guru, after all, is only the intermediary between the individual and God, between man's outward-turning mind and inner essence. If the submission and aspiration are strong enough the Grace will flow, even without a visible channel. "There are certainly laws regulating the flow of divine Grace, but

the Grace is more than the law. Or it might be more accurate to say that a commonly applicable law is overridden by an emergency law. That guidance comes only through regular channels may be the commonly applicable law, but Divine Providence will not therefore leave men without guidance in their time of need. To deny this possibility of overriding the regular law would be to attempt to tie the hands of God."⁵

One hears of more and more cases nowadays of the Spirit blowing where it listeth, of Grace and intuitional understanding descending directly on some aspirant without the mediation of an outer guru or the formalities previously held necessary. And while legalists may try to bind men with the letter of the law, the Masters themselves bring about a relaxation. "If ours is a time of emergency when a relaxation has come about in the formerly rigid laws of orthodoxy, the first persons to see this and react to it would naturally be the guides themselves; and it is noticeable that all the prominent gurus of India from the time of Sri Ramakrishna onwards have diverged from the orthodox pattern...."⁶

One response to the peculiar needs of the time is the possibility of following a Guru who is no longer physically embodied. One case is Ramana Maharshi; another is Sai Baba,⁷ there may be others too. When the Maharshi was a youthful Sage on the sacred mountain of Arunachala he always refused to accept initiation.⁸ Being identical with its Source, he could not subordinate himself to the channels through which it flowed. When disciples gathered round he refused to designate himself a Guru, since for the Enlightened there

can be no others and therefore no relationship; but he explained that from the point of view of the disciple the Guru-disciple relationship is a reality. He declared that there is no difference between Realization with a body and without. For him who is established in conscious Identity with pure Being the body is only an appearance and nothing is either gained or lost by its dissolution. From this it follows that one who is a Guru when embodied can be a Guru equally well when disembodied. When some disciples asked him before his body's death what they could do if he left them without guidance he replied cryptically: "You attach too much importance to the body," indicating that its disappearance would make no difference to the guidance.

The initiation that comes thus to his followers is independent of ritual, but it was in his lifetime also; a sustained penetrating look, a dream or vision, or just the inner certitude of having been taken up. Those who have been taken up by him since he left the body are in

no less certainty as to his guidance than those who followed him already in his lifetime.

Formless initiation is one of the relaxations of orthodoxy that have come about in recent times. It has been used also by Sai Baba and by Swami Nityananda, perhaps by others too. Sai Baba died as far back as 1918 and yet he too appears to his followers in dream and vision and guides and supports them.

The Guru is the Spirit of Guidance. Ultimately this is to be found within oneself. Whatever awakens one is acting as Guru. "The purpose of the outer Guru," the Maharshi said, "is to turn you inwards to the inner Guru." And yet in this regard also there is no easy formula, no guarantee against error, for just as the aspirant may be misled by false outer gurus reflecting undesirable qualities in himself, so he may dignify various inner urges with the name of Guru. Constant vigilance and intelligent purity are necessary.*

* Courtesy *Hermes*, a French periodical.

1. *The Essentials of Zen Buddhism*, p. 320, Rider.
2. "Talks with Ramana Maharshi" and "Day by Day with Bhagavan".
3. From "Spiritual Instruction".
4. "Guidance and Orthodoxy" from "The Mountain Path", Oct. 1965, p. 212.
5. *ibid.*
6. *ibid.*
7. For whom see "The Incredible Sai Baba" by Arthur Osborne, Orient Longmans.
8. See "Initiation Rejected" by Nagamma, "The Mountain Path", Oct. 1965.

TALKS WITH BABA

Following are some of the recorded dialogues between the devotees and Sri Muktananda Baba.

Devotee : How, when and by whom was the world created?

Baba : The world is the creation of God. He felt 'I am alone' (*eko'ham*) and desired 'I shall be many' (*bahu syām*) and the world came into existence. God himself is the objective and subjective cause of the world. The world has emerged out of God and will also merge into Him, just as a spider spins a thread out of its own body and again absorbs it.

Instead of thinking about the how, when and why of the world seek the Truth, try to liberate yourself from the bondage. Let me make this clear: two men once entered a big mango grove to taste the mangoes. There was a rule that every one should vacate the grove within a stipulated time. One of the two climbed a tree and ate as many mangoes as he could. The other one went round the garden examining the qualities of the trees, their date of plantation, their place of origin etc. While he was still examining the trees the time was over and he had to leave the grove without tasting a single mango. That is the reason why I advise you that before your time is over, know and realise the Truth and all your questions will get solved unasked. Attain the God-head and you will find everything identifying itself with you. The whole Universe will, as it were, belong to you.

Devotee : How can one know God?

Baba : The knowledge of any subject is obtained through various means such as direct experience, inference, words of trustworthy persons (*āptavākya*) or authentic texts like the scriptures.

To believe in what a recognised authority says on a particular subject is known as the means of learning a thing through trustworthy persons. Now as you are a great nuclear scientist, I must unquestionably believe in whatever you say regarding the atomic energy, nuclear physics etc., because you are a recognised expert on the subject. In the same way you must believe in what I say in reply to your questions on spiritual science, as it is a subject in which I have specialized.

At the time of one's birth one does not know one's parents, but as one grows older and develops understanding one comes to know one's mother and father through the words and actions of one's own parents and also through other relatives. Similarly mother *Shruti* (Vedas) and the saints declare that Parabrahman is your creator. The *Shruti* says:

मानव ! तुझे नहि याद क्या ! तू ब्रह्म का ही अंश है ।
कुछ गोत्र तेरा ब्रह्म है, सद्ब्रह्म तेरा वंश है ॥

(O man ! don't you remember that you are a part of Brahman ! Your family name is Brahman. You belong to the race of Sat-brahman). You have to believe the words of mother *shruti* as it

is only the mother who knows your real father.

You can understand this subject by direct experience also. But to get that experience you will have to devote a few years. Even to become a scientist one has to complete a prescribed course of studies for some years. You are inviting me to visit your laboratory, I will certainly come and see everything personally. I too am inviting you to come to my laboratory (Ashram). Like you I also have full knowledge of my subject and I can give you a direct experience of it.

According to the Vedanta the world was never created but it is only an illusion. Just as an illusion is created when a rope is mistaken for snake in the dark, so also is the world an illusion created by the mind and superimposed on Parabrahman. The world seems real only till one attains true knowledge. When the wavering mind is stilled, the truth is revealed.

An enlightened soul does not see the objective world. How then could he describe it? Once a man who was sleeping near Swami Ram Tirth dreamt of a tiger with two horns. He woke up with fright and asked Swami Ram Tirth "where has the two-horned tiger gone?" Since Swamiji had not seen it what reply could he give? Take another example. A crow and an owl have contradictory experiences. One sees only in daylight while the other can see only in darkness. How then could 'The Sun' be a subject of their discussion! It would surely make them quarrel—so they had better avoid the controversy. It is useless to talk unless the two persons are on the same level. It would otherwise be like a talk between two men who have tuned their radios to

two different stations. One asks the other "which melody is this?" The other replies "How do I know it? I am hearing the news."

Waking, dreaming and sleeping are the three states normally experienced by every person but beyond these three there is a fourth state, known as *Turiya*, entering which one realises the Truth; and then, one knows that the world is unreal. Therefore go beyond the first three states by awakening the divinity within you.

* * *

Devotee: Babaji, please give some advice to us, who are worldly people with family responsibilities.

Baba: Who is a worldly man? It is not the children, wife, house and business that bind a person to the world. It is the feeling of 'mine' and 'thine' that binds one to the world and makes one a worldly man.

So long as the ideas about the world arise in one's mind one will continue to experience the duality of pleasure and pain. The way out is to learn to renounce the world mentally because it exists in the mind alone. Real happiness lies in such renunciation. Everyone unknowingly experiences this happiness while relaxing at night. However enterprising and rich a man may be he cannot be happy unless he gets a good night's rest. But to get a good night's rest he has to cast aside not only his costly jewellery and dresses but also all his thoughts and even business plans for the time being. Thus he becomes happy by abandoning and not by embracing the worldly thoughts during sleep. Try to attain this thought-free state of mind even while you are awake.

One does not have to abandon anything physically. Even if one wishes one cannot do so because everyone's destiny is preordained. It can neither be put off nor can it be changed. Therefore learn to make the best use of your circumstances and the means at your disposal. Let the world remain as it is. Try to forget it and turn your mind inwards. Sit quietly and meditate on the Self. Visualise and realise God within you.

My advice to you is that just as you reserve time for various business and other activities, devote some time to the repetition of God's name and meditation. If you keep up regularity in this practice, you will find that gradually it continues effortlessly throughout the day.

There is so much power in the divine Name of God that by meditating on it or by repeating it a person becomes God-like in course of time. This does not happen in other cases, for instance, continuous repeating of the name of a doctor or an engineer will never make a person a doctor or an engineer.

Develop the spirit of faith and surrender to God. Insure yourself with God, so that He will help you in the hour of need.

* * *

Devotee : Will it not be harmful if a person without any preparatory qualifications, such as the spirit of renunciation and the knowledge of scriptures, is blessed by a Guru with his divine power? Will it not inhibit his natural spiritual development?

Baba : Gurukripa does not inhibit the spiritual growth. On the contrary it helps to develop it faster and with greater ease. Through Gurukripa there is an awakening of soul consciousness,

which automatically gives both knowledge and detachment. The Guru, of course, should be capable of bestowing divine grace.

Devotee : How to recognise such a Guru?

Baba : It is a matter of common experience that we know a person through acquaintance. For instance some body talked to you about Ganeshpuri, Swami Nityananda, his powers etc., which aroused your curiosity. You came here to see things personally and met us. Similarly you may go to other places and come across a person whom you might recognise as your true Guru.

How do you select a good college? First of all, you collect information about various educational institutions. Then you make a decision. This process of meeting people in the line and acquainting ourselves with people and places is called *satsang* by those in the spiritual line. It takes us to our destination.

Devotee : Many saints change the destiny of the devotees by their grace. Is this not against the Divine Law?

Baba : Who are you and what is your profession?

Devotee : I am a professor and am teaching in a college.

Baba : On what basis do you impart knowledge to the students? By which law do you differentiate between one student and another and decide to make one learned and let another remain dull? No, there is no such law. Similarly the saints only help their devotees to attain spiritual knowledge by their divine power. This is certainly not against any law.

Devotee : Does one obtain miraculous powers by Gurukripa?

Baba : The real work of a Guru is neither to give miraculous powers to others nor to perform miracles himself. To awaken the divine consciousness of the seekers and to lead them on the path of self-realization is the chief mission of a true Guru.

Performance of miracles is like a magic show and has no spiritual value. It serves no purpose other than amusement and is a diversion from the spiritual path. Miracles are the result of concentrated mental powers. They are only mental creations and have nothing to do with salvation which is beyond the reach of the mind. Secondly, if the Lord created such a vast Universe by a mere wish why should man, who is supposed to be God's image on the earth, find it difficult to create something by his mental powers? Therefore, I do not say that miracles are false, but what use are they?

In fact the whole Universe is full of miracles of the Lord. The rising and setting of the Sun, Moon, and the myriad of stars, the seasons changing at the appointed time, birds flying in the air, fish living in water—what are they

if not the miracles of God? To perform petty miracles is therefore like holding a candle before the Sun. It is nothing more than abandoning the outer physical world in order to create a smaller world of the mind. Both are the same, because both are illusory. The Vedanta describes them as transient while God is eternal, changeless and far beyond all this.

It is easy to learn how to perform miracles, but to make the mind devoid of all thoughts requires lot of effort and quite a long time too. There is no real peace till the mind is stilled. Therefore one in search of everlasting happiness and bliss must give up all sorts of worldly thoughts and desires. If one gives importance to the material world it will continuously form its image in one's mind, making it restless. So try to still your mind.

The intelligent and discriminative sadhaka regards the material world itself as an obstacle to the progress on the spiritual path. What purpose, he thinks, will then be served by creating another fictitious world of miracles?

We should empty the heart of its contents, and then will God live in it. No other remedy is required, says Tuka, to see God. We should nip all our desires in the bud. Where desires end God comes to inhabit.

—Sant Tukaram

UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF A SIDDHA

by Smt. GITA OBEL (JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA)

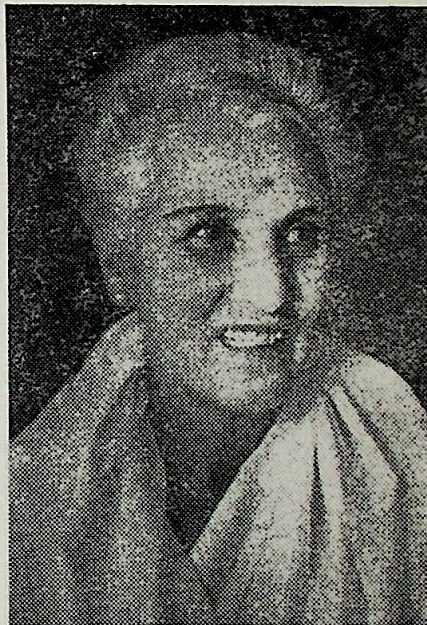
Smt. Obel conducts meditation groups in South Africa. She and her husband came and stayed at the Ashram in June this year also.

Am I leaving Ganeshpuri? How sweet are the loving sisters of Shree Gurudev Ashram! Instead of retiring for a short afternoon rest, they are staying with me and my husband until it will be time to depart. The day is, as usual, warm, the sky clear, the air dry.

After short embraces with the divine sisters, I prostrated at the holy feet of the Master—Swami Muktananda Paramhansa, the Celestial Swan who bears his loved ones to the final stage of evolution assigned to man on this planet. He knows the way to freedom. His own name is the 'Joy of Freedom'. He is the Compassionate One, who feels every pain, every tribulation of humanity, having himself trodden the weary roads of tears and sufferings. Triumphantly he ascended the ladder of being and like an eagle from Elysian heights, he surveys all life above and below. He is the one who liberates man from the ignorance of his self-made delusion.

In my heart, there is one continuous refrain: "When am I returning to Ganeshpuri?" Every step now is a step away from my beloved India, away from the goal, away from the promise to fulfill that which is the basic longing of every religious soul. To search for our true Being, the Divine Consciousness, which we are in Essence, is our only birthright.

The Lord calls and although at first the sound is, as if, from a distance, the



GITA OBEL

seeker is impelled to follow the sound of silence in rapt ecstasy, never ever turning back. Every other call, every other promise is now like a wilted leaf lying in the dust of busy roads. The religious sees the blazing light of higher worlds—worlds where the Sun of peace never sets. Once having had the foretaste of this eternal joy, other joys seem pale and empty. Can such a one ever mistake a pebble for a diamond?

Man's true self is immortal and eternal. This Knowledge, this self-luminous

Flame, the Atman is above the play of the qualities of nature, above man-made limitations, above the ignorance of temporal mind.

To be under the guidance of a Siddha Guru is of the most significant consequence on the path of self-realisation. The sense of human frailty leaves the seeker. He feels protected from the assault of adverse forces. A wonderful calm settles in the depths of one's being. It is, as if, one moves in different dimensions—in planes of purity and pure bliss. Is this the death of the lower and the birth of the Higher?

Wherever I go and whoever I meet I want to announce the great news: "I have a Guru now, I have found him! Come all ye who struggle and suffer, there is a way! Come and look at his lustrous countenance, listen to his gentle words of wisdom. He will bless you, for he is the way himself!"

On that memorable day in Ganeshpuri, now over a year ago, Babaji graced me with his unique initiation. He placed his finger on my forehead between the eyebrows and said: "Your Shakti will pass on to others". This was the *Shaktipat-diksha*. His Divine Shakti coursed through my being and activated the flow of the spiritual life. Like celestial fire it plunges me into the depths of inner worlds and lifts me into altitudes of blazing light. What takes years to achieve becomes effortless and full of joy with the help of a Siddha. I have read many books on Yoga, since in their illuminating words I was seeking guidance. But the path of Yoga and the mysteries of the Divine Life can only be understood at the lotus-feet of a Guru.

The Guru being the embodiment of

the Divine is the living chalice and generator of the Divine power. A single touch, a look, or any other way he chooses to impart this God-power effects a transformation in the lives of those who turn to him. It is said "Ask and ye shall receive." Those who in this wise receive the Shakti from the Siddha Guru find that, whereas they used methods and effort to still the mind, now they can meditate naturally.

Man being in essence Divine has to still the restlessness of the human mind. The tyranny of the thought-process must cease; the winds of passion, prompted by desire, must be stilled, and only then can the calm surface of the waters reflect the brilliance of the undimmed Sun.

Peel the onion skins of your earth-born nature, in thy very core, man, Thou Art Divine!—this is Muktananda's gospel! With a sure hand does he lead his disciples to the realization of the consciousness that the Lord is within.

Is it possible that once the Siddha Guru bestows his Shakti to the disciple, that this power of the Godhead acts through the disciple, and which in turn can be transmitted to others? Yes. The disciple as it were becomes a channel of Power and Grace.

My Gurudev's words have come true. I have noticed that when my heart is filled with *bhāva* (love) for my Gurudev, quite unconsciously does the Shakti begin to act on those who are receptive to the Divine. On one occasion, during a small gathering, I felt a great peace and was filled with divine ardour. As I was speaking quietly, I felt the presence of my Gurudev Muktananda. I saw the eyes of a young woman grow large. She suddenly exclaimed that a

current of considerable power entered into her heart like a bolt of lightning. Not being accustomed to a force of this kind she turned very pale. I said to her that she was very fortunate, for she received the Shakti of my Sadguru—"Wherever two or three are gathered in My name I am in their midst".

On another occasion, during a *satsang*, a young lady had a most extraordinary experience. This is what she writes: "On Tuesday night, the fourteenth of December, I attended a meeting on Yoga, where Gita Obel gave a lecture on Yoga to a group of people. After lecture and discussion we were invited to meditate. As we started to meditate, a heavy feeling settled on my chest and I began to feel very quiet. Suddenly my whole mind became still and my body felt weightless. I felt as though the real 'I' was rising up and up. I was completely unaware of my body in its usual form and just wanted to float further and further up. At this stage I heard the chanting of 'Om'. I knew this meant I must return to my earthly body and I did not want to. However, I tried to and so slowly opened my eyes and tried to work out what had been going on".

There have been many occasions of

this nature. I am aware of Gurudev's presence and often probe the faces of those in the room, whether anyone has been receptive to the Divine. The Shakti once given by a Siddha works its own way and wondrous are the experiences, uplifting, healing and encouraging to the seeker.

But the road to the goal must be completed, I know this full well. It is a mistake, as many do, to claim authority in Yoga when one has not reached the utmost summit of this noble journey. In the *Precepts of the Gurus* it is said: "To attempt to explain to others doctrines which one has not completely mastered oneself is to be like a blind man leading the blind; and this is a grievous failure," and "It showeth weakness in one who hath caught a glimpse of Reality to fail to persevere in *sadhana* till the dawning of full Enlightenment."

Fortunate am I, having been graced by the Divine Guru, for he has called me back to lead me ever onwards—ever higher—ever deeper—ever wider—to break the prison-house for ever, to emerge from the darkness of confinement to the Realms of luminous Divinity! "The dewdrops slip into the shining sea"!

Obey the Scriptures until you are strong enough to do without them, then go beyond them. Books are not an end-all. Verification is the only proof of religious truth. Each must verify for himself. And no teacher who says, "I have seen, but you cannot," is to be trusted; only that one is to be trusted who says, "You can see too." All Scriptures are true, in all times, in all countries; these truths are to be seen and any one may discover them.

—Swami Vivekananda

THE UNSEEN SAINT AND HIS DIVINE MAGNETISM

by Smt. GARGI CHADHA (NEW DELHI)

Accept me as thy own, Gurudev !
—गुरुदेव ! मुझे अपना ले—that is how my first prayerful poem to my 'Unseen Saint' begins. My husband was rather taken aback when I showed him the poem one evening. He could hardly believe it, for I had always regarded it as sheer blind faith and credulous ignorance to be the disciple of any guru and to repeat a *guru-mantra* or to go to temples, *sankirtans* or the so-called holy men. As to how and why this cynical sceptic in me had suddenly changed into an ardent devotee and started writing devotional poetry at an amazing pace, I could not say—not then at least.

My husband had become a disciple of Muktananda Baba, after visiting the Saint's Ashram at Ganeshpuri and staying there for a fortnight. This happened in June 1965, about two months earlier than the day I also decided to become Baba's disciple. When my husband returned to Delhi from Ganeshpuri, I was not in Delhi. On my return, I saw a new large picture adorning a wall of our drawing room. I was told that it was a photograph of the great Saint of Ganeshpuri. But my worldly eyes could not see in that picture anything more than the photograph of an ordinary human being. My husband told me many interesting stories about the almost miraculous experiences of Baba's devotees but they failed to inspire faith or devotion in me.

Soon afterwards, however, I discovered that gradually a change was

coming over me—a change in my thoughts and topics of interest. Divine thoughts started arising within me, as I looked at the Saint's photograph day after day. It was no longer the photograph of an ordinary person. To my surprise, I found myself thinking about the photograph and the two lustrous eyes in it even in my busiest moments. Sometimes I would become so deeply absorbed in the picture that it seemed as if I had become unaware of my own being. It was a strange but pleasant experience.

My devotion and reverence for Baba kept increasing every day. One day all of a sudden I was so overpowered by devotion that prayerful sentiments embodying a strong desire to be accepted as a disciple of the God-like Saint started arising in my mind. They found expression in the form of a prayerful poem. My husband who was to go to Hyderabad on official work, decided to visit Ganeshpuri for a couple of days, on his way back. I sent the poem along with a short letter to Baba. When my husband returned, he told me that Baba had sent a *guru-mantra* for me. I felt extremely happy to have that unique, divine gift. At first I could not do much *Japa* of the *mantra*, as my mind was used to saying my own prayer in my own words, but gradually it so happened that without even my thinking about it or making any effort I would find myself doing the *mantra-japa*, whenever I had an opportunity. I

kept thinking of my 'Unseen Master' more and more.

It was a pleasant surprise for me to find that whenever I sat for my prayers in the morning or evening, visions of gods, goddesses, and celestial lights would appear before my eyes like a movie-film. I would experience a heavenly joy whenever I saw these visions and would not feel like opening my eyes. Even in the daytime I would feel an inclination to keep my eyes closed. Previously, I used to find it very difficult to sit quietly with eyes closed—and now, it was difficult to keep the eyes open!

UNPRECEDENTED DEVOTION AND POETRY

My mind started being with my great 'Unseen Master' almost all the time—whether going to or coming from school, teaching in the class or working at home, sleeping or awake. I had to walk some distance to catch the bus while returning from school. Previously I did not like to do so, but now I started looking forward to it, as I used to find myself very near to the great Saint in those moments when I was all by myself. I would talk to him mentally and feel his presence. My mind would become full of devotion and without the least effort, daily, some lines of poetry would get composed in my mind during that time. I noted them down either on the bus stop or in the bus. That period of coming back from school all alone, intoxicated with devotion for my 'Unseen Master', became the most cherished and joyful one. This divine intoxication started developing fast. I would like to think of my Divine Master, to write about him and to talk about him only. I would feel a divine joy more or less

all the time. Even while performing my worldly duties I would feel as if I was unattached to them.

Writing poems about the Master became a passion with me. My mind was flooded with poetic inspiration and overflowed with devotional verses. While walking or resting, waking or sleeping, working or sitting idle, talking or listening, all the time my mind was busy thinking of the 'Unseen Saint' and my intense thoughts and sentiments about him kept seeking expression through verses. Sometimes even three or four poems would get written in a day and that too without any effort. Who can have the power, I often wondered, to bring about such a tremendous change, to convert a hardened sceptic into an ardent devotee and to inspire her into composing such devotional lyrics? And that too from a distance of a thousand miles—unseen, and unheard in person. I started wondering, "Is this Saint the Lord Incarnate?" As if in reply, immediately the lines often recited in praise of guru started echoing in my heart and my whole being:

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुर्गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः ।

गुरुः साक्षात् परब्रह्म तस्मै श्री गुरवे नमः ॥

(Guru is Brahma, Guru is Vishnu, Guru is Shiva, Guru is verily the Supreme Brahman. To that Guru I bow). This became my favourite verse and I started humming it often.

My devotion for the saint increased further and reached a new pitch of intensity. One day I was doing some household work. Though my hands were busy with work, my mind was engrossed in thinking of the Master. Soon, I was so overpowered by the intensity of my sentiments that I burst into tears and they became uncontrol-

lable. I felt as if I would lose my balance of mind. In desperation, I prayed to my Divine Master and beseeched him to give me control over my overwhelming emotions. As if by magic, my tears stopped at once and I felt so normal as if nothing had happened.

I SEE MY UNSEEN MASTER

On the 8th of January, my husband and I left for Ganeshpuri to spend a fortnight at the feet of our Divine Master. On arrival at Ganeshpuri, we immediately went to Baba. He greeted us with great warmth and talked to us for sometime. We sat there the whole afternoon and saw a number of visitors coming from far and near to pay their respects to Baba and seek his blessings. He asked them about their whereabouts and welfare and talked with them about worldly matters. The next day also I witnessed the same routine.

In appearance, movements and talk, Baba seemed to be just like a man of the world—so very different from what I had imagined my 'Unseen Saint' to be. I had visualised him as a saint, deeply engrossed in the Lord, sitting in profound silence and abiding in the superconscious realms, talking but rarely and that too about spiritual matters alone. What a contrast the ever active Baba talking about and attending to mostly the things of the world was, to what I had imagined! My preconceived picture of the 'Unseen Saint' was shattered—and my devotion for him gone, irretrievably it seemed. I tried to remind myself of his God-like powers which had aroused in me such incredible devotion and inspired me to write poem after poem, as never before. But it was no use. My mind knew no peace, no rest. I was in terrible distress

and wept bitterly. I did not know what to do and yet something had to be done, for I could not bear this any longer. Instinctively, I felt that Baba alone could give me peace. Impulsive as I am, I rushed to him, fell at his feet and with a voice half choked with tears, I said to him, "My mind is feeling extremely restless, Baba! What shall I do?" Calm, unperturbed, silently reposed in Divinity as I had wished to see him, Baba said softly, "It will soon be over. The mind gets restless before becoming tranquil. This state of restlessness and tearfulness is a sign of the awakening of the Kundalini Shakti."

The restlessness was all gone by the next morning. Instead there was a deep sense of peace and joy. My devotion and reverence for Baba again gushed out and my lost paradise was regained. In this heaven there was no worry of any kind—not even about my children whom I had left at Delhi practically by themselves and from whom I was far away, for the first time in my life. There was a strange feeling, a heart-felt conviction that they were under Baba's divine protection and nothing could go wrong with them. And so it was.

Baba, the all-knowing Master, knows everyone's desires and grants them too—just as a compassionate mother grants the desires of her children, even if they are childish sometimes. Knowing that I yearned to see him thus, Baba would often manifest himself to me as the God-like Saint, in silent communion with the Lord, as I had imagined him to be.

One day I told him, "I have had a vision of Bhagwan Nityananda twice, though I hardly think about him, but I have never seen you in a vision, even

though I remember you almost all the time." "It is good and correct to see him" he replied and then kept quiet. Later on, Amma explained to me, that "There is no difference between Muktananda Baba and Bhagwan Nityananda. It is the same Shakti which continues in a disciple being imparted to him by his Guru. So it is quite befitting if one has the visions of Bhagwan Nityananda though one is blessed by Muktananda Baba." But soon after my above talk with Baba, to my great and pleasant surprise, I started seeing, almost all the time, Baba's two divine eyes, within a halo of celestial light, whenever I closed mine.

On the day of our departure from Ganeshpuri, I was overwhelmed by my sentiments and could not control my tears which started flowing unchecked at the time I went to take leave of my Master. "Why do you cry?" said he, "Baba is there also". And true it is. I find my omnipresent Master here, there and everywhere—all the time with me. As soon as I close my physical eyes, my inner eyes start seeing two divine eyes showering their limitless grace, and the ears constantly hear that heavenly musical sound—*Anahat Nad*.

INVALUABLE SECRET GIFTS

Baba's supreme gifts are often bestowed on the devotee without his knowing anything about them at the time. This reminds me strongly of the well-known Krishna-Sudama story. When Sudama's wife finds their stark poverty no longer bearable, she forces her husband to go to his friend Lord Krishna for help. When Sudama reaches Krishna's palace, Krishna receives him with great warmth and gives him every comfort. But neither Sudama

mentions anything about the purpose of his visit nor Krishna gives him any monetary help at the time Sudama takes leave of him. Poor Sudama wends his way home despondent at the thought that the main purpose of his visit had not been achieved. But as he reaches home he is wonder-struck to see a beautiful palace in place of his mud hut and his family enjoying all the palatial comforts.

Like Lord Krishna, my Divine Master too knows the innermost needs and desires of his devotees, and fulfils them generously without the devotee knowing anything about it. He bestowed on me the invaluable gift of worrylessness, knowing that I had specialised in worrying about anything and everything and that too at the slightest pretext. After returning from my pilgrimage to Ganeshpuri, I was happy to find that I was no longer a worry-addict. Through my Master's grace, even the most difficult situations have almost lost their terror for me. Previously I used to be like a dry leaf which was blown away by the slightest gust of worry but now it seems as if my Divine Master has transformed that dry leaf into an evergreen tree which can stand the strongest storm.

Another precious gift that I have received from my Master is that of freedom from drugs. Being a chronic sufferer from physical ailments, I used to take some medicine or the other almost daily. But now I hardly take any. Many ailments which used to trouble me quite often and took several days to be cured are now checked much more speedily—and that too, without any medicine.

My Master has not only showered blessings for my physical and mental

welfare but also for my spiritual progress. The divine remembrance and meditation are gradually becoming easier and much more enjoyable for me. Many and invaluable indeed are the secret gifts of my Gurudev.

My countless humble *pranams* to the ever gracious Divine Master with whose single kind look all the worries seem to flee into the distance, whose divine power awakens the latent faculties of the mind, heart and intellect, and with whose grace the mind

starts experiencing unprecedented peace, tranquillity, contentment and joy.

In what words can one express one's gratitude to such a Guru, who showers his hard-earned spiritual wealth, so liberally, even on insignificant creatures like me! Bowing at the sacred feet of such a supreme Master, I offer him all my devotion and reverence—my whole being—and pray to him most humbly to guide for ever and ever.



We are no more responsible for the evil thoughts that pass through our minds than a scarecrow for the birds which fly over the seed plot he has to guard. The sole responsibility in each case is to prevent them from settling.

—Swami Vivekananda

If a lamp is shaking and unsteady, we cannot enjoy the sight of object. It is only if it shines steadily that objects will be clearly visible. Similarly it is only a steady mind undeflected by miscellaneous thoughts that can help enjoy the bliss of our inmost self.

—Sri Kamakoti Pradeepam

THE GRACE-FOUNTAIN OF GANESHPURI

by SWAMI SHANTANANDA (RISHIKESH)

Swami Shantananda is a disciple of Swami Shivananda of Rishikesh and was his personal secretary for the last ten years.

दुर्लभं त्रयमेवैतद्देवानुग्रहेतुकं ।
मनुष्यत्वं सुमुक्षुत्वं महापुरुषसंश्रयः ॥

The above verse is the oft-quoted famous declaration by Holy men from time immemorial—'Rare indeed are these three, possible by Divine Grace alone; the human birth, the longing for liberation, and the company of an exalted Soul'.

These three things are the very rare gifts given unto us by the Almighty. After passing through eighty four lakhs of species—in the mineral, in the vegetable and in the animal kingdoms—we, finally, are blessed with a human birth and not otherwise. It takes millions and billions of years for the soul to come to possess a human body in the process of gradual evolution.

Even then, the longing for Liberation, the burning desire to be in communion with the Cosmic Beloved, the divine discontent for the things ephemeral, the unquenchable thirst for the Elixir Divine—all these are signified by the term *Mumukshutva*—comes to a man only at the end of a series of human births. It is the grace of the Almighty that one is blessed with this rare gift called *Mumukshutva*.

Lastly, the rarest gift, very hard to attain, is the company of an Exalted Soul. Let us not imagine for a second that to go and meet a saint or a sage is a simple and a common phenomenon.

It is not as easy as it looks. Even to have a mere *darshan* of a Holy Soul is the result of meritorious deeds we have done in past lives and to be in His presence always, under His motherly protection and Divine guidance, is something of a rarest blessing and a richest gift one can have and one gets from God himself.

The holy presence of a saint or Mahatma is elevating. His looks, gracious and loving, are purifying. His words are inspiring for they proceed, not from his intellect, but from the innermost recesses of his heart where he has enshrined the Lord. His words are spontaneous expressions of his rich inner experience. So those words of a saint have an inherent capacity to elevate, invigorate and illuminate our hearts. The world perhaps knows not the great service rendered by a saint to humanity. For, his is a Dynamism, though highly active, yet imperceptably Silent. He brings forth a silent revolution, a silent transformation, not outward but inward, in our lives, a transformation sometimes, even the receiver is not aware of. He is a Lighthouse which guides the ship of life in the formidable ocean of *samsara*. He is a Boat-man who takes you safely across the *samsaric* ocean and leaves you on the other shore of immortality, everlasting peace, perennial joy and bliss. Such is the glory, such is the

grandeur, such is the greatness of a Saint. This blessed land of *Bharat Varsha* is a cradle of spirituality. From time immemorial, from the remote past to the present day, sages and saints, jnanis and bhaktas, yogis and mahatmas have appeared time and again, trodden the length and breadth of this holy land with their sanctified and hollowed feet, and have purified and surcharged the entire atmosphere wherever they went with their powerful spiritual vibrations. They have brought forth redemption in the lives of so many all over the land.

One such great spiritual giant of the modern days, was His Holiness Swami Nityananda Mahapurusha who had his abode-de-Grace at Ganeshpuri near Bombay. The blossomed flower never sends an invitation to the bees to come and drink the nectar from its bosom. The bees cannot resist the magnetic pull of a blossomed flower. Such was Swami Nityananda, the divine flower in this earth-garden. He never spoke much. He never sent any invitation to anybody. But all of us know how the metropolitan city of Bombay thronged the abode of this Saint, day in and day out and still flooding, though he has given up his mortal coil. The solace and comfort, the peace and happiness, he has showered upon the people who

came to him is something indescribable and unimaginable.

From that great fire of Wisdom and Grace was lit a spiritual Torch which is now known as Swami Muktananda Baba.

The rays of the sparkling eyes of Swami Nityananda can be now seen and recognised in the divine sparks that emanate from the eyes of Swami Muktananda Baba. This Torch, lit from the great fire is now lighting the darkened chambers of hundreds and thousands of aspirants and seekers all over the globe.

The grace-fountain of Ganeshpuri is an eternal spring. Anyone irrespective of caste, colour, creed, race or nationality can go there and have a dip into it. To drink a little from the fountain is to refresh you. To bathe in it is to purify your soul. To dive in it is to dye your being with grace and wisdom. To merge in it is to become one with Nityananda Himself.

As I told you before, we are blessed with these three gifts—the human body, the *Mumukshutva* and the company of a Holy Soul Swami Muktananda. Let us utilise this opportunity, go there often, drink from the Fountain of Grace and become Immortal.

Om Tat Sat

Whosoever wishes to see a king must first seek the company of one who is a favourite of the King. Whosoever is aching to see the Lord, let him seek one who has become one with Him.

—Guru Nanak

LEAD KINDLY LIGHT

by RAM PRATAP (NEW DELHI)

I am one of those to whom nothing has ever happened suddenly. I have had no dramatic experiences, no moments of glory, no catastrophe. My rewards in life have resulted from steady hard work and not inspired acts.

My induction to the spiritual aspect of life has been a very slow and gradual process. About ten years ago I started attending lectures on Gita by a very learned saint. I continued attending for a long time because of the saint's extra-ordinary eloquence and my satisfaction in knowing something about a philosophy which I had been wanting to study but had never got down to it. In the University I had at one time felt a strong urge to study the philosophy of religions. I was advised that that would not get me a job easily and I urgently needed one. I decided on a course which had more ready market. Study of religion, particularly Hindu scriptures, remained for years an unfulfilled desire and the Gita lectures during which the saint covered practically all the scriptures provided a 'marvellous made-easy'.

I became aware of the possibility of a human being developing personal relationship with God and ultimately becoming one with Him. It was stated that the human being was an integral part of Him and the process was in fact a re-union culminating in complete merger. However, all this appeared so abstract and distant that I could not imagine...this happening to...common-

place people like myself. Perhaps the best I could do was to lead a 'righteous' life, and that seemed to be about the furthest I would go.

In December 1960 at Bombay, during a conversation about saints, a friend suggested a visit to Ganeshpuri. We went the next day. I joined the long queue and had Baba Nityanandaji's *darshan* for a few seconds. We spent the afternoon picnicking. On the way back we stopped to spend a little time with Baba Muktanandaji. He was relating to the devotees around him the story of a prince who had got separated from his parents in childhood and had become completely like the tribesmen who had brought him up. After some years the king's minister succeeded in tracing him, and he made him realise that he was really a prince. I remarked, "I wonder if I am also like that prince and someday some minister will make me regain my real heritage". All laughed. I felt pleased at having made a smart remark, and we left for home. Soon after I was transferred away from Bombay. Ganeshpuri went out of my mind.

From about mid-1962 onwards, an unconscious change took place in the type of books I read; reading having been my favourite hobby. General books, of which I used to cover quite a wide range, lost appeal. The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna and the writings of his direct disciples, particularly Vivekananda, became my main study. The

Gospel absorbed me most and I read it over and over again. Another book which left a very deep impression was Saint Dnyaneshwar's discourses on Gita, the English translation of which had been with me for years but I read it only towards the end of 1963. I read more than once the portion relating to Guru's grace. During this period I also started meditating for a while everyday though I was not particularly successful.

I was on a visit to Bombay in December 1964. I arrived on a Sunday morning. My host and his wife who are deeply devoted to Baba Muktanadaji asked me whether I would like to accompany them to Ganeshpuri or look up friends in the city. I went with them. Babaji greeted me as if he had known me for years. His close devotees were to have their mid-day meal that day in the Turiya Mandir, the new meditation hall. Babaji told me to join. It was a unique feast. There was Babaji beaming like a loving mother and his 'guests' of varying ages were full of mirth as carefree playmates. In the afternoon we all sat with Babaji. Hardly anyone spoke, except he himself occasionally when some new person came in. Hours passed. Normally such state of inactivity and quiet would have been unbearable but that day I seemed to enjoy it. In the evening I roamed around the ashram and talked to some of the devotees. I was struck by the strange mixture of calm and joy. Everyone seemed to be always smiling. After supper some of us spent about an hour with Babaji. He regaled us with the account of his travels many years ago all over the country.

Two days later I had a free forenoon. I could have found a number of things

to do in Bombay but I felt an irresistible urge to spend it in Babaji's company. He was alone when I reached. I mentioned to him that I would stay for about two hours. During that time he had other things to attend to. So we did not talk very much and still I felt that I was in most delightful company. At about 11-30 he patted me on the back and said, 'you better go.' It was like parting from a very dear friend.

Back to Delhi, I started missing Babaji and Ganeshpuri. I could not explain how sitting quietly with him and staying in a remote ashram were more pleasant and satisfying than the social life and entertainments of a big city, but it was true. After that I saw him, every time I happened to visit Bombay. I felt restless if the interval became too long. His subtle gestures of affection and the happiness I felt in his presence completely captivated me. His affection has no limit. I at times behaved like a spoilt child. He responded by showering more love. I returned from every visit dazed with delight, reciting his favourite couplet :—

तेरे करम से वेनयाज्ञ कौनसी शै मिली नहीं ।
झोली ही मेरी तंग है तेरे यहां कमी नहीं ॥

(Thy grace is boundless, there's nothing thou didn't grant me. It is my bowl that is small, there's no limit with thee).

Meantime, my pattern of life has been undergoing a change without any conscious effort on my part. Meditation has become longer and spontaneous instead of a mental exercise. It induces a feeling of elation. I have become more cheerful and communicative. Problems arising in working life play less on my mind. I have stopped bothering about

frequent calculations to budget my limited income. There have been obvious indications of more humility and tolerance in my conduct. Cynicism has given place to a positive and buoyant outlook. I still love meeting friends but the circle is getting restricted and futile social activities have lost all attraction. Devotional music now appeals to me more than ever before. I find that simple devotion and prayer are much more satisfying than reading and arguing about God.

Though apparently small changes, these are big enough for a small life. Put together they have led to a new design for living. The changes have come imperceptibly and have brought me great deal of happiness. Babaji never

prescribed any do's and don'ts, nor did he administer any advice, and yet he has imparted new vitality and dimension to my life.

One morning a few months ago at Ganeshpuri, after a little meditation in Turiya Mandir, I rushed to Babaji. There were just two of us. I suddenly asked him if an ordinary person engaged in worldly duties could realise God and, if so, after how long. He smiled and related the story of the prince who had got separated from his parents. This time I made no remark. I simply reflected.

My submission to Babaji is: "I used to think that I was the captain of my life's ship and knew how best to manoeuvre it. I find your navigation more effective. LEAD KINDLY LIGHT."

*As fragrance abides in the flower
As the reflection is within the mirror
So doth thy Lord abide within thee
Why search Him without?*

—Guru Nanak

There are pearls in the deep sea, but you must hazard all perils to get them. If you fail to get at them by a single dive, do not conclude that the sea is without them. Dive again and again and you are sure to be rewarded in the end.

So also in the quest for the Lord, if your first attempt to see Him is fruitless, do not lose heart. Persevere in the attempt, and you are sure to realise Him at last.

—Sri Ramkrishna

YOGI AND A LAYMAN

by PROF. U. M. MANIAR

Prof. Maniar is the Vice-principal of the S.N.D.T. College, Bombay.

The Yogi has scarcely any use for words. Even when he uses words, they are merely evocative. A layman, on the other hand, revels in words. A most recurring part of his vocabulary is the egoistic "I". How I wish I could write without I-ness, but this happens to be a peculiar handicap of language, which begins, in its primitive stage, with crude gestures and ends, in its yogic stage, in meaningful silence. Only crash ignorance and supreme knowledge have no questions to ask and no answers to seek. But the two states are the two extremes of a pole—one plunged in total darkness, the other bathed in perfect light. By the time he achieves his supreme state, the yogi acquires more powerful modes of communication, where sometimes the eyes take over the function of the tongue and sometimes the thought is conveyed at will without recourse to the usual channels of self-expression.

Among the miracles wrought by the Lord, we are told, is dumbness transformed into speech. But perhaps the greater miracle is silencing garrulity into sheer dumbness. Are there no occasions—however rare—when a person is simply struck dumb in some irresistible presence, which freezes at a glance all his assets of learning and demonetizes at a stroke all his wealth of words? But a true yogi is nothing if not tolerant. He who silences a roaring lion into a docile lamb often lets a child

prattle and even allow it to pull his beard!

Let me prattle then about one great yogi, whom I saw only once and about another, whom I have seen more than once.

Several years ago, I was out on a picnic with a group, which while returning decided on a detour of its itinerary to visit Ganeshpuri, where reportedly a great yogi, who rarely spoke, attracted thousands of men and women like a magnet. On the periphery of a rather unassuming structure of cement and stones wearing a yellow coat of paint, was ranged an impressive fleet of motor-cars, smacking of success and wealth. Diagonally towards the centre moved the humbler sort, no less rich, at least, in devotion and faith. Flower-vendors in the vicinity seemed to be doing a roaring business, reaping the harvest of their *bhakti* strictly in cash, here and now, whereas the others had perhaps to wait to see their devotion bear fruit in this life or the next. I sometimes wonder if warmth of devotion could only be expressed by expensive garlands, where a lot of money withers away along with the flowers before the sun is down. I am reminded of a great American, who expressed a dying wish that those who cared to honour him should tender money equivalent to the price of flowers to swell the fund for the treatment of deadly cancer. A very large amount of money was thus collect-

ed and canalized into the service of the poor and the suffering. I am not against flowers so long as they are tokens but not measures of one's warmth of worship and veneration.

Anyway, the flowers were there and cocoanuts too. It was a Sunday afternoon. As men, women and children went in with folded hands carrying flowers and cocoanuts in silent awe, I also joined the orderly queue and had a glimpse of the great yogi from a small open door, as he lay prostrate full length on the floor with his front down, back up, head erect supported on his arms and eyes conversing with infinity.

This was Bhagwan Nityananda, who after varied austerities practised over years at different places, had finally settled down at Ganeshpuri, raising a tiny non-descript hamlet to the stature of a holy centre of pilgrimage—himself a legend in his life-time. There was a sea of human heads heaving in, out and everywhere. But there was no sign of Baba—I mean our Baba. I had then no eyes to see him or perhaps he was just not there.

Before I saw Muktananda Baba for the first time in flesh and blood at Santa Cruz at Yoginbhai's, I had seen his photograph in the first number of *Guruvani*. There in the picture was a clean-shaven luminous personality and here was a bearded figure with curly hair, sitting cross-legged on a cot in the dim evening light of a smallish room, looking all too human. Somehow the picture and the original did not seem to tally, because I sought resemblances in the exterior.

There were about two dozen people in the room, but no one talked. As I did my *namaskar* rather hesitantly, I guess as all first comers do, Baba gave

me a bewitching smile as if he knew me for ages. Selecting a distant nook I sat down quietly, scanning him like a poem. Still no one talked and the silence was growing almost intolerable for me. I wondered why no one said anything. Surely, it was not for lack of people who could talk—and talk intelligently too—for I could spot out among the gathering at least half a dozen people whom, if anything, it would probably be difficult to stop, once their jaws got started grinding words, words and words.

As if to suggest that neither silence nor speech was a rigid rule with him, Baba broke the spell of silence and soon the little room was humming like a bee-hive. It was almost past ten in the night and as some people left, others came in. I wondered when this yogi, who always left his bed at the pre-dawn hour, would get a chance of even forty winks. As if not bothered at all about any thought of sleep, the tireless Baba sprang up from his seat with the agility of a young deer and occupied a cushioned chair next to the garlanded portrait of Nityananda Baba, facing me. Giving me a searching look, he asked me if I had ever been to Ganeshpuri and on my submission that I had been there some years back, he gave me another of his disarming smiles and coaxingly invited me to come and stay at the Ashram some time, holding out rather shrewdly the attraction of the Ashram garden and the peaceful environment of Nature in which the Ashram is set. This is indeed, he knew, how the spiritual toddlers had to be handled at the outset.

It is most natural for a yogi to talk about God and yoga, religion and philosophy, but this yogi seemed to know

that there was time for everything. He has a spacious garden, which he tends lovingly, but never hastens it to bear premature fruits or flowers. As with fruits and flowers, so with men—ripeness is all. Silence fell over the room again. A little later, darting a quick glance at the clock on the mantel-piece, Baba smilingly gestured the company one by one to leave, but not before handing a *prasad* to each of them. I too gathered my *prasad* and left.

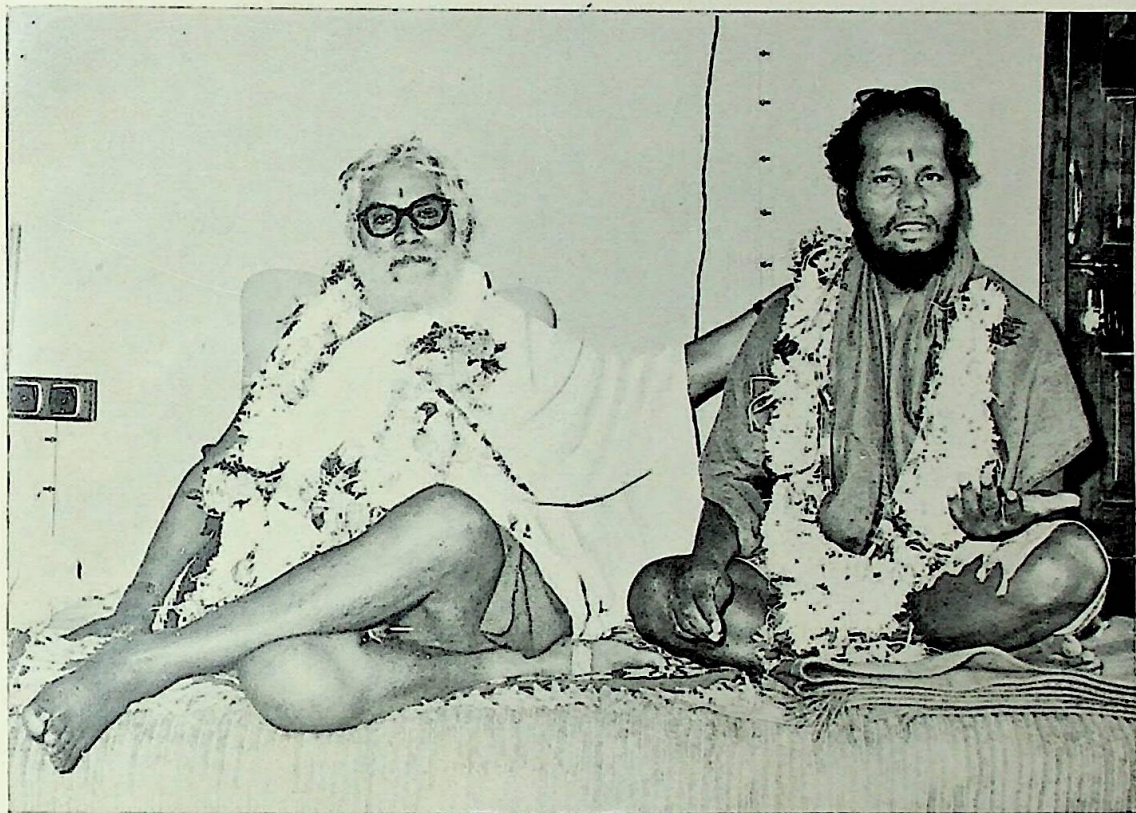
Then followed, some time later, my first visit to the Ashram. The change from the din and bustle ridden city to the peace of the countryside was at least, in the physical and topographical sense, astounding. Not that this was my first experience of physical peace that overwhelms all the senses of a person visiting a hill-station or a valley. But this was somehow different. Even in the loveliest of hill-stations and valleys, the atmosphere though peaceful remains social and worldly. Here, one seems to leave the day-to-day world behind and enter into a new one with a different atmosphere.

The journey to the Ashram is symbolically long but not difficult. I had never been there before, but even the inanimate State Transport Bus seems to know where to halt. Along with numerous others, I alighted from the bus and entered the porch of the Ashram. Cleanliness is said to be next to godliness. Here, cleanliness and godliness are inseparably intertwined, or rather godliness is at the centre of cleanliness. The well-swept approach, a couple of sentinel-like pine trees with a tree immediately behind, fanning out its green branches like a hundred outstretched hands of a divinity, blessing all those who entered, led to a clean carpeted

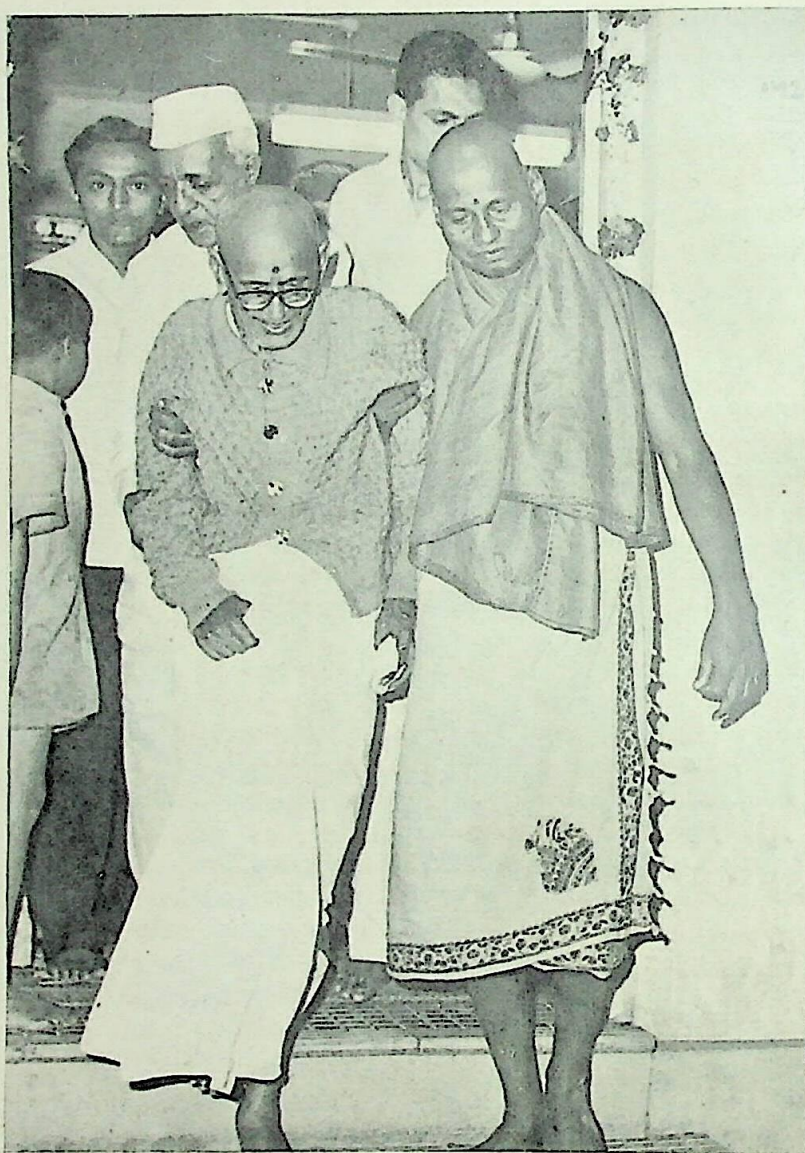
ante-room, wherein sat a number of people facing a spacious chair.

There in the chair sat Baba, bare-bodied with a solitary garment reaching down from his loins to the knees, curiously close by a well-arranged profusion of bales of cloth for which he had no personal use. As I did my *namaskar*—a little more warmly, I must confess—his eyes twinkled and he gave me the same bewitching smile, murmuring something that sounded like a note of gratification that I was there. I do not know how old Baba is, or where he was born and brought up. These are immaterial for those who have stepped into eternity and renounced the world lock, stock and barrel along with their past.

A layman like me cannot presume to know what went on in his head, but there was no doubt about the fact that though perched on eminence, his feet were literally and symbolically firmly planted on the earth. He knew that anyone after a long journey would need to eat and rest. He immediately directed someone to take me up the hill to a rest-house. My first night's stay up-hill at the Ashram was an unprecedented experience. I had never seen so many stars in my life and I had never known, except vaguely in books, the sky to be so enormous, the trees so tall, I so small, peace so deep and the moon so bright. I had a lurking suspicion, as I sat out late in the night, that the stars were mischievously winking at the moon and the moon was smiling at my sweet confusion. I thought I would be a fool if I were to waste the night in sleep when heaven had unfolded its rich mystery like a scroll before me. But sleep could not be denied too long.



SRI RANG AVADHUTA MAHARAJ and BABA in Turiya Mandir, on the day when Sri AVADHUTAJI was accorded a grand reception by our devotees



BABA leading Sri **RANCHHODBAPU** to the garden

It easily succeeds with a layman when it fails with a yogi.

My first visit to the Ashram was not a hit and run affair. It extended over four days, when by a lucky coincidence I met a genuine soul seeking enlightenment—Mr. Anthony Brooke, ex-Raja of Sarawak—who had travelled from the other end of the earth to meet Baba. Those four days were a sumptuous spiritual feast. As the eminent pilgrim reverently posed his questions, Baba answered them—the range, depth and spontaneity being simply breath-taking. To the surprise of his most intimate devotees, whom he had initiated into the gospel of silence, Baba discoursed on a variety of most intricate questions of yoga and philosophy, enlivened by spicy anecdotes and homely illustrations. I devoured every word of it, but now if you ask me what he said then, I could

only refer you back humbly to Baba, but if you insist, I can only say that I don't remember it any more than what I had for my dinner last week. All that matters of dinner should be, I think, what is absorbed in flesh and blood, even as all that matters in listening or reading is what sinks within the depths of one's consciousness, to be a part of one's being.

This is no attempt to size up a yogi; a layman dare not do it for the simple reason that he has neither the tools nor the equipment to do it. He has a long way to go before he hopes even to get beneath the skin of a yogi. He has to wait for the spark from heaven, to watch and absorb. As a layman I could do nothing better. As my first four days at the Ashram drew to a close, I left with a feeling of one returning to the mortal world when his short leave-and-licence arrangement with heaven is over!



From the same curds come out both butter and butter-milk; but two cannot be priced at the same value. On the sky appear both the Moon and the stars; but both are not of equal lustre. From the same earth come pebbles and diamonds; but the two cannot be priced equally. Similarly, says Tuka, Saints and Sinners are both men; but we cannot worship the two alike.

—Sant Tukaram

THE MASTER

by DWARKA KHOSLA

To admire is natural, more so when one writes about the Master. Writing about the Master becomes effortless, as it is intimate and spontaneous. It has a direct impact, for at the time of writing one is very near the Master, so very near that one begins feeling the touch and even hear the breathing of the Master.

You, my reader, have the right to say that it is a 'make-belief'. You may even begin to think that the writer is either not rationally correct or is a paid propagandist. I do not blame my reader for having such thoughts, for to doubt is the beginning of the questioning mind. The mind cannot take things for granted. "It should not"—tells my Master. Once the mind has accepted, then you are in harmony. The Master often says: "Mind is not to be forced, for it cannot be forced, just as knowledge cannot be learnt but it is gathered."

Most of us have forgotten age-old truths, so we have become ignorant, at best educated ill-literates. There is a possibility of lifting layer over layer of ignorances, that is, to start the cleaning process. In other words to start living in the right sense of the word. This may look to some a stupid idea, but it is very true. We have made our process of living very complicated, and the beauty is ('tragedy' will be a better word) we love to keep on adding more and more complications. It has made us like a tea-kettle all the time on fire. Buddha's *Fire Sermon* says, "The mind

is on fire, thoughts are on fire. Mind-consciousness and the impressions received by the mind, and the sensations that arise from the impressions that the mind receives—these too are on fire. And with what are they on fire? With the fire of greed, with the fire of resentment, with the fire of infatuation; with birth, old age and death, with sorrow and lamentation, with misery and grief and despair they are on fire."

My reader will say "Yes, it is true, but what has this to do with the Master?" You may even doubt that the writer, in a crazy way, is trying to advertise Sanatogen, Horlicks, or any other patent brain tonic. I am grateful to the reader for he has in his restlessness accepted that he is in search for a medicine. To accept is to open a door that was shut for a long long time. So let us open the door to the Master and let us together try to reach him. To open to the Master is to open to the Divine. You must have heard that you have immense potentialities lying within you, dormant. Swami Vivekananda has said that each soul is potentially Divine. You may like to know once again the meaning of potential or dormant. In every human being there is divine force lying latent. That force has to be awakened with the Master's help. Without his grace the awakening cannot be effective.

The music of the 'Divine Word' is vibrating in all of us alike. One has to

learn to hear it in silence. There is a Zen saying :

"You remain silent and it speaks,
You speak and it is silent."

Therefore, empty yourself to get filled with the Divine music. You have to be silent outside to be attentive within, like the seed that ripens in silence.

We are to-day in the Age of Noise. Physical noise, mental noise and noise of desire. This is the twentieth century and you have to accept noise as a part of it. Look at the radio and the transistor. It has come in our homes. Allow me to say 'deep in us', so very deep that it has penetrated the mind. Recorded music has killed the music. The music which was once dearly loved is now of canned variety. The present Age has waged a war against silence and thus created an obstacle between the human soul and its divine Source. William Law asks : "What need of so much news from abroad, when all that concerns either life or death is all transacting and at work within us?"

It is true that the external life is transient while the inner life is immortal and divine for it springs from the Almighty God. The question is how to reach him? God is omnipotent and the Creator of the entire world. Human mind and intellect cannot reach Him, because the human being himself is His creation. Therefore, those who strive to find a way to seek Him within through their own efforts are unconsciously led into bylanes where they only meet with shadows cast by their own desires and imagination. Hence, the man who aspires to contact the Divine within is well advised to put a stop to the rising of imagination and thinking. He has to humble his knowledge of

physical sciences and his human wisdom before God who rules within his self.

The conditions of life upon the earth change from generation to generation and mankind is easily influenced by these ever-changing conditions. In the present age the intellectual faculty of man has developed to such an extent as to become dominant. No doubt, it has enabled great progress in the realm of material science but, the external or gross development is given more importance than the subtle inner evolution in the realm of Spirit. This has led the mankind into the region of imagination and thinking rather than into the region of divine intuition and inner awareness of his true being. And this again has resulted into an incessant activity of the mind without giving it any scope to rest and enjoy inner peace.

Certainly it is very necessary that man should think and utilize his intellect to earn his daily needs of living and organise his existence here, on this earth. But he will have to abandon the mind together with the intellect to establish a contact with the inner life, to understand the working of the divine flow within, and to realize his true self. He will have to still the thought process to experience the vibrations of the Divine Power within.

The above truth has repeatedly been enunciated by those who, in times past and present, have intimately experienced It. And it is these Masters who possess the key to the door of inner world. Today the need of such Masters is greater than ever before, for we are in a Jet-age and in an age of miraculous technology.

There are many who talk of learning philosophy and literature. They call

themselves theologians, and give you a running commentary on what is good and what is bad. They are like encyclopedias but 'inwardly they are deaf'. In the noise of their own thoughts and words they cannot hear the inner murmurs of their own soul. They are forgotten by their own selves. Words of Lao Tzu well applies to them :

"He who knows does not speak,
He who speaks does not know."

But the Master, who has realised the Truth in its fullness, is indeed the one who imparts the true understanding and gives us the glimpses of divine Reality if he is approached with the openness of mind and heart. He is a mystic and knows the secrets of the ways to reach the inmost region and visualize the Divinity.

The Masters are the guardians of the eternal truth and spiritual traditions. The Truth is one. It is neither new for the present age nor was it old in the ancient times. In all countries, at all times and in all conditions it remains

unchanged, unobstructed. All the Masters preach this very Truth. And God has not deprived the world of such Masters, because it is they who sustain it. They have the power to reveal the truth by making us understand the true values of life and the meaning of lasting happiness. In their company alone men can attain inner peace, contentment and mental stability. "It is they who, dying to themselves, become capable of perpetual inspiration and so are made the instruments through which divine grace is mediated to those whose unregenerate nature is impervious to the delicate touch of the Spirit" writes Aldous Huxley.

To understand as understanding should be and to learn as learning should be, let us go to the Masters. Let us sit there with child-like sincerity and learn by emptying ourselves. Fortunate is our country where we have Saints and Enlightened Souls, who are the Masters. The writer has accepted one such Master at Ganeshpuri, Swami Muktananda Paramhansa, affectionately addressed by a single word....BABAJI.



When a thorn runs into your foot, you take it out with another thorn, and having done so, you throw them both away. So relative knowledge or vidya is necessary to remove relative ignorance or Avidya, which blinds the eye of the self. But before a man can attain the highest Jnana he must do away with both of them. For, God or Brahman is above and beyond both knowledge and ignorance, above and beyond all relativity.

—Sri Ramakrishna

OUR BABA

by JAYKANT PATTANI

He helps them most
Who helps them find themselves ;
Who restores them unto themselves ;
Who opens the doors to their own complete unfoldment.

He helps them most,
Who places before them the vast panorama
And says to them, "Rejoice and be yourselves !"
"Say unto yourself—here I am ! Here I stand !"

He is glad to see the place none other can fill.
The doors that by his touch are opened wide, he sees.
He sees ! He shows !

He causes the blind to see.
He causes the dumb to speak.
He causes them to listen,
Who in their speaking never heard themselves before.

With his capacity, he makes the humdrum unique ;
The unique he shows unto itself.
He does nothing more though,
He merely sets the innate free ;
He helps the beings—Be !
Few in millions can ever do this.
He is one of the few.

THE UNFATHOMABLE BABA

by B. S. CHADHA (NEW DELHI)

"He is no longer Muktananda. He has become Parabrahma. He has become Sadashiv."

Do you know who said these astounding, almost incredible words? No, not an over-zealous devotee, over-powered by blind faith. These profoundly significant words were spoken by the omniscient avadhoot, Bhagwan Sri Nityananda, the great Guru of Swami Muktananda.

This happened in the year 1956, when Swami Muktananda used to live at Chalisgaon where he had a large following of devotees. In those days, he practised severe austerities and lived on merely a handful of grams as his daily diet. Sometime in September he told two of his devotees to go to Ganeshpuri for *darshan* of Bhagwan Nityananda. Mr. Rajgiri (now an officer in the Life Insurance Corporation, Dist. Aurangabad) was one of the two devotees and narrated the story thus during a recent visit to Shree Gurudev Ashram. As Mr. Rajgiri and his companion reached Ganeshpuri, they found that huge crowds had gathered there for Bhagwan Nityananda's *darshan* and were standing in a long interminable queue. Swami Muktananda had warned them about this and asked them not to force their way in. So they stood amidst the crowd about a hundred yards away from the gate of the audience hall. To their surprise, a messenger came out of the gate shouting "Where are the two devotees

from Chalisgaon? Babaji wants them". The astonished Mr. Rajgiri and his companion made their way through the crowds to the gate and were escorted by the messenger to the august presence of Bhagwan Nityananda. Addressing them, the Saint said "Why have you come here? Everything is there at Chalisgaon. Go back. He is now the Master of a great Kingdom. What more is left to achieve? He has attained perfection. He is no longer Muktananda. He has become Parabrahma, he has become Sadashiv. He has driven out the *Brahmarakshasa* from *Bhootkhana*.* Why does he starve his body? He need not do so any longer. Tell him to come here."

As he said these words, Bhagwan Nityananda stood up in a state of

* Bhootkhana incident :

Bhootkhana was the name given by the residents of Chalisgaon to a haunted house in that town. Whosoever tried to live in the house was thrown out and four persons lost their lives in this manner. Despite the people advising him against it, Swami Muktananda occupied the house, and this time it was the *Bhoot*—the *Brahmarakshasa*—who was thrown out, for no harm was ever done to Swamiji or the others who stayed in the house afterwards. Possibly, Bhagwan Nityananda was referring not only to this incident but also the *Brahmarakshasa* within us—the ego self—which Swami Muktananda had now driven out completely and become one with the Lord.

spiritual ecstasy and began to dance, with hands raised, chanting "Muktananda Paramhansa, Muktananda Paramhansa, Muktananda Paramhansa....." and thus conferred the title of Paramhansa on his worthy disciple.

A couple of months later, Bhagwan Nityananda sent one of his intimate devotees Shri Narayan Shetty, from Ganeshpuri to Chalisgaon to give this message to Swami Muktananda, "Come and stay here." Respecting his guru's wishes, Swami Muktananda came to Ganeshpuri, towards the end of 1956, and settled there permanently.

Another incident which throws further light on Swami Muktananda's spiritual status is worth mentioning. The incident was narrated by some devotees from Dombivalli who became instrumental to build the present Dhyan Room of Baba Muktananda—a sacred place situated at the back of the audience hall in the Ashram, where many sadhakas get wonderful spiritual experiences.

Sometime during 1956, a rumour became current that Bhagwan Nityananda was going to enter into *Mahasamadhi* soon. Some of his devotees went to Bhagwan Nityananda and asked him if this was so. His reply was in the affirmative. The devotees became anxious and wanted to build a temple and place an image of Bhagwan Nityananda in it. The saint gave his consent and instructed the devotees from Dombivalli to build the temple at Gavdevi. Another group of devotees got ready the image. When the image was ready, and Bhagwan Nityananda was informed about it, he said "Give *Mahasamadhi* to this image." Accordingly, the image was immersed in the

nearby river. A few days later, when the temple was ready, the devotees from Dombivalli asked Bhagwan Nityananda, "Which image of yours should we install in the temple?" "Muktananda", replied Bhagwan,—indicating that Muktananda was his living image and fit to be enshrined in a temple, having become one with the Lord.

In response to Bhagwan Nityananda's wishes, the devotees made arrangements for a ceremonious inauguration of the temple building. The ceremony was performed on 16th November 1956 when Swami Muktananda Paramhansa was housed in the temple room with the chanting of *mantras*, the performance of *Puja* and the serving of a *Bhandara* (a feast) for all the devotees and others who attended the inauguration. As desired by Bhagwan Nityananda, this day is celebrated by the devotees from Dombivalli as a sacred day by holding a *Bhandara* on the premises every year ever since 1956.

CAN A HUMAN BECOME GOD?

Is it possible for a human being to become Parabrahma, that is, one with God?—one may well ask. The answer is that through the grace of one's guru and by following the prescribed sadhana with unremitting zeal a sadhaka ultimately reaches the highest goal of all spiritual endeavour—the *Isha-avastha* (Godly state) wherein he experiences complete identification with the Lord and merges with Him. He then acquires His infinite love, wisdom and power, just as a drop of water merged with the ocean acquires the qualities of the ocean.

The rationalists among us are however apt to be sceptical about a human

becoming God and acquiring his characteristics. Whereas we can accept and do accept that Bhagwan Sri Ram or Bhagwan Sri Krishna was God in human form, it becomes somewhat difficult for us to accept that Sri Ram-krishna or Maharshi Ramana or Bhagwan Nityananda were equally so. If, however, one sheds this conventional idea or belief and gives deep unbiassed thought to the point, it will be seen that when a human being achieves complete self-realization, he no longer identifies himself with the body or mind but as stated in *Mundaka Upanishad* (III, 1, 3), "when the Jiva sees the golden coloured Creator, the Lord Purusha, the author of the Vedas, then the realizer (the Jiva who has realized his true self) having cast off both vices and virtues becomes pure and achieves absolute sameness with Him." In other words, the fully self-realized saint becomes absolutely one with Lord. There remains no difference between the two.

The *Upanishads* advise us to ponder over the *Mahavakya* "I am Brahman", clearly indicating that one can reach this state by realizing one's identity with the Supreme Lord. Hence, there is nothing to wonder at, if an aspirant attains to that state.

A man of science, an American doctor, Dr. Julian Johnson, M.D., who came to India in search of truth and stayed for six or seven years at the feet of a spiritual master in the Punjab has also said something similar which helps to clarify the position further. He writes in his book *The Path of the Masters* :

"It is a fact that there is no difference between the real Saint or Master and the Supreme Being Himself except the

fact that a saint is humanly embodied Suppose we agree that the Supreme Being is all love, wisdom and power, that He is omnipresent, all-pervading, then the Master is exactly the same, except as to his physical limitation. Spiritually, he has no limitation.

If one must ask, 'How can these things be?' the answer is, because the Master is one with the Supreme, and the Supreme One is expressing Himself through the Master's form. The Master's form is the Lord's form.... That means that henceforth, while the Master may speak and act through his body much the same as others do, yet in reality he is the Supreme One who is acting and speaking. It is no longer a mere man with clouded and limited understanding but a man who has become God, and God who has become man."

THE MASTER AT GANESHPURI

Let us revert now to the saint who is the subject of this article—Baba Muktananda, who now resides at Shree Gurudev Ashram at Gavdevi, Ganeshpuri. His mission in life is to lead the sincere seekers to their divine goal. He does so *par excellence*, especially through the invaluable gift, which he has, of giving Shaktipat Diksha to the deserving devotee, whereby his Kundalini Shakti is awakened and his spiritual journey becomes the shortest and pleasantest possible. Baba is indeed a great Guru. As one of his most advanced disciples remarked once, "As a rule, a guru only guides the disciples on the spiritual path, but Baba is that rare guru who carries the disciple forward with his own Divine Power"—and in a luxurious supersonic plane too.

The Divine Master influences even the devotees, who are not yet fit for

Shaktipat, through his spiritual power and prepares them to receive the Shaktipat Diksha. His ways are mysterious, though. For instance, the all important *mantra* initiation is given in the most casual manner; inestimable spiritual help is bestowed through Shaktipat or otherwise, without the disciple even knowing about it, and the devotee's day-to-day problems are solved and the answers given without his having to express in words his questions or problems. Perhaps the explanation is that the Guru's Shakti once given to the disciple stays with him and guides him whenever necessary.

The greatness of the Divine Master is very difficult to comprehend—particularly for the new comer. To one's materialistic eyes, Baba appears to act and behave like an ordinary mortal, but in various ways, the real seeker will get glimpses of his Divine stature—during those precious moments when he sits in silent communion with the Absolute with his whole being reposed in Divinity; when through a look, a word or a sentence the meaning of a deep spiritual truth is revealed to you as never before; when your questions are answered unasked or when you experience the intense tranquillising vibrations which he radiates.

On the purely human or worldly level Baba, the perfectionist, sets a glorious example for the devotees to follow. He is a versatile personality, who plays every role as only a perfect man can. It is indeed a treat to watch him acting the *Karmayogi* with a tremendous capacity for work; the *ideal disciple* with an incomparable devotion to his guru; the *inimitable host* overflowing with joy and reverence on receiving a

visiting saint; and the *adorable Guru*, who has, for his disciples, the tender-hearted compassion of the Divine Mother and the ever-vigilant care and protection of the Almighty Father.

BABA'S PUZZLING PECULIARITIES

On the other hand, Baba's actions and behaviour often baffle the visitor and it seems hard to reconcile them with what one normally expects from a saint. For instance, Baba seldom talks about spiritual matters unless asked, but does so often and at length about things of the practical life. He is very agile and seems to be restless. He loses temper too—or so it appears—and he gives a bit of his mind to his closest disciples over what seem, at best, to be trivial errors. Again, it often happens that he does not talk to his devotees who have come from afar for days together, whereas he talks warmly and for quite some time to others who are just casual visitors—and that too on matters which can hardly be called spiritual.

What is all this, one wonders. Surely one expects from a saint, and his Ashram, discourses and instructions on matters of the spirit, devotional songs, *kirtans* and the like. Again, a saint is supposed to look a picture of profound peace, imperturbable temper and forgiveness rather than otherwise, as indicated by the actions and behaviour which have been just mentioned.

What is this mystery? There must be an explanation for all this, for there is irrefutable evidence, on the other hand, of Baba's infinite love and compassion, of his remarkable scriptural knowledge, of his limitless spiritual powers and his utter selflessness. There are innumerable instances of how he

has bestowed peace, prosperity, health, devotion and spiritual enlightenment on those whom he has considered deserving of his divine grace.

Doubtless there is an explanation for every action of the great Master howsoever peculiar it may seem, but the explanations are not easy to find. Sant Tukaram has said, one has to be born a fish to know how a fish can sleep in water. Likewise, one has to be something of a *Mahatma* to understand the *Mahatma*. Let us then turn to the saints for explanations of their own peculiarities, for they alone are competent to give them.

Fortunately, Maharshi Ramana, the renowned saint of Tiruvannamalai has himself explained one of the important points which seem peculiar to the visitors. Like Baba, Maharshi Ramana too seldom preached through words. Once a devotee asked him why he did not do so. Maharshi replied thus :

"Preaching is simple communication of knowledge; it can be really done in Silence only. What do you think of a man who listens to a sermon for an hour and goes away without having been impressed by it so as to change his life? Compare him with another, who sits in a holy presence and goes away after some time with his outlook on life totally changed. Which is better, to preach loudly without effect or to sit silently sending out Inner Force?"

Again, how does speech arise? There is abstract knowledge, whence arises the ego, which in turn gives rise to thought, and thought to the spoken word. So, the word is the great-grandson of the original Source. If the word can produce effect, judge for yourself, how much more powerful must be the preaching through Silence."

"To sit silently sending out Inner Force",—that is what Baba does. He is sending out spiritual vibrations of incalculable value all the time and wants the disciples to make the best use of them by receiving them in silence and utilizing them for turning the mind within towards the blissful realms of Divine Consciousness. Where then is the need for giving discourses, which can never be half as effective as the spiritual vibrations which Baba sends out?

Another peculiarity of Baba which perplexes the visitor is: Why does he lose temper and give a bit of his mind—and a good bit too—often to his dearest disciples? The answer to this question was once given by Amma, one of the closest disciples of Baba. She said, "Baba does not lose temper but only uses it as an instrument. When he seems to scold his disciples in the public, he does so, generally, to set an example to others, the newcomers, who suffer from the faults for which the disciple is chastised. Baba's anger is like Lord Krishna's whip, which strikes only one horse but has its effect on others too". Amma also added, "You may have noticed that some times Baba gives a bit of his mind to casual visitors too, though normally he is very gentle and cordial to them, but he does not fail to silence them, if they are obstinate egotists by hitting them hard on their conceited opinions. Ego-annihilation is an important mission of all saints and they have to use subtle as well as harsh methods to suit the individual cases. And Baba is no exception to root out the ego—that persistent cause of human suffering—from his disciples as well as others."

How is it that at times Baba seems to be suffering from high blood pressure, 'flu, dysentery or some other ailment? It puzzles you to see the omnipotent Master, who is known to have cured even the incurables, himself suffering from physical ailments. And yet, you are reminded, practically all masters are known to have suffered from physical diseases. What is the explanation? It is given by Swami Yogananda Paramhansa in his book *Autobiography of a Yogi* thus: "The metaphysical method of physical transfer of diseases is known to highly advanced yogis. A strong man can assist a weak one by

helping the latter to carry his heavy load; a spiritual superman is able to minimise the physical and mental troubles of his disciples by assuming a part of their karmic burdens." How munificent, how kind, how compassionate the great saints are!

The ways of the Lord are mysterious, inscrutable, unfathomable—and so are those of Baba. The more you know Baba, the more you realize how imperfect your knowledge is and how far you have yet to go to understand the infinite aspects of his Divine personality. He is indeed unfathomable.

*The ray hath merged in the Sun
the wave in the sea;
The light hath merged in the Light
and man is fulfilled.*

—Guru Nanak

When the sword has been turned into gold, by the touch of the philosopher's stone, it continues, no doubt, to have the appearance of a sword, but it can do no harm to any. Our ego, similarly, if made pure by realising God can do no harm to any one.

—Sri Ramakrishna

SAINTS AND SOCIETY

by S. K. WANKHEDE
Finance Minister, Maharashtra

During one of my visits to Ganeshpuri I was asked by Sri Muktananda Baba to see another great saint who was camping at Vajreshwari at that time. This was none else but Sri Rang Avadhoot, the renowned saint of Nareshwar. The grand old sage was sitting in a small dark room and received us in a warm informal manner. There was not much of a talk going on but now I have come to realize that speech becomes secondary in the presence of these great saints. Somebody broke the silence and introduced us formally to the saint and casually remarked that my wife who had also accompanied me, was just recovering from a long illness. Sri Rang Avadhoot's response to this remark was very quick and pleasant. He suddenly held his palm outstretched before my wife and said "Come along. Give me that illness of yours. If the thing troubles you, I don't mind accepting it with pleasure. I always invite these maladies to come all together with all their arms and ammunition and try their tricks on this body of mine. I do not mind them at all." Sri Avadhoot said this in an easy, off-hand and selfless manner which immediately won our hearts. I could not resist the temptation of expressing my appreciation of this saintly gesture of universal goodwill and recited a famous Sanskrit stanza which says that these saints are like trees which take all the beatings of Sun, wind and rain and still shelter

any passerby from the attacks of these elements—

छायां अन्यस्य कुर्वन्ति तिष्ठन्ति स्वयमातपे ।

We all heartily laughed over this and in a few minutes we took our leave of Sri Avadhoot Maharaj.

The incident is still fresh in my memory and makes me think of the precious service rendered to society by these selfless servants of God. They do not make a profession of the saffron robes nor do they belong to the class of the *Talking Machines on Vedanta*. They live Vedanta and are able to lead others on the path of self-realization. I personally feel that the peace and bliss experienced in their presence are glimpses of the Infinite which they are capable of opening up for the aspirants. Even otherwise they live a life which can set an example for people from all walks of life.

Shree Gurudev Ashram of Ganeshpuri is itself an instance of this type. The beautiful Ashram garden is literally laid out on rocks. Swami Muktanandji has put in hours in tending this garden with the result that its flowers and fruits have won prizes in district agricultural shows. The Ashram grows its own rice. The paddy cultivation is also done by scientific methods under Swamiji's personal supervision. It is a pleasure hearing him talk of the different varieties of rice, manures, Japanese method, *Taichung*, the nuisance of crabs

and so on. In fact it is a practical lesson in agriculture and those who are not interested in spirituality can at least get easy benefit of Swamiji's experience in agriculture. The construction of building in the Ashram is also personally supervised by Swamiji who knows the exact proportion of sand, mortar and cement which can make a leak-proof ceiling. He can easily detect

faults in the working of the contractor and can himself train any one in the construction line. All types of visitors meet Swamiji every day and the way in which each one is attended to is in itself a lesson in practical good manners. From all this one can confidently say that our Saints do not live on charity. They work hard and form an important sector of our society.

You see many stars at night in the sky but find them not when the Sun rises; can you say that there are no stars in the heaven of day? So, O man, because you behold not God in the days of your ignorance, say not that there is no God.

—Sri Ramakrishna

There are no stages in realisation. There are no degrees of Jnana. So that there cannot be one stage of Jnana with the body and another stage when the body is dropped. The Jnani knows that nothing exists but the Self. To such a one what difference could the presence or absence of body make?

—Sri Raman Maharshi

THE SAGE OF GANESHPURI

by RAMESH CHANDRA AMIN (BARODA)

Shri Amin was the professor of mathematics at the Baroda College. He is also proficient in astrology.

I had a yearning for spiritual advancement from an early age, though I commenced systematic sadhana only a few years ago. I made a beginning by joining the Yogoda Satsang Society, founded by the late Paramhansa Yogananda, but I soon realized that I must have a living guru whom I could contact often and from whom I could receive divine grace. I went to many places all over the country in search of a guru. I met many saints and took *mantra-diksha* from some of them. Finally, I came to Subud, founded by Pak-Subuh, the well-known Indonesian Saint. My stay in this faith, so far, is the longest.

Despite my regular spiritual exercises, I did not have the inner satisfaction of having progressed to my expectation. Nor did I feel—despite having met and taken *mantra-diksha* from more than one saint—that my quest for a master had been fruitful, till I met the sage of Ganeshpuri—Muktananda Baba. I was impelled from within to surrender myself completely to him in spite of my contact with him for a brief period. In his presence all my soul's yearning seemed to find fulfilment. His overflowing love, magnetic personality and child-like simplicity completely disarmed me. I began to experience the working of his grace no sooner than I came in his contact, for

my minor difficulties were solved easily and the major ones were either minimised or I felt within me the strength to face them.

How did I find my Master? It so happened that in *The Mountain Path*, published from Sri Ramana Ashram, I read a highly complimentary review of *Guruvani* (1965 issue). I ordered a copy of the magazine and was so much impressed by reading the remarkable experiences which devotees had had at the feet of Swami Muktananda Paramhansa that I took the earliest opportunity of visiting him at his Ashram in Ganeshpuri. Accompanied by a friend, I reached the Ashram one afternoon in the last week of February.

Baba was in the main hall talking to devotees. He enquired about us as soon as he saw us and made us feel at home immediately. Though it was my first meeting with him, I felt as if I had known him for a long time. As I sat before him, a feeling of calmness descended on me after a while and my mind became quiet and relaxed—an experience which one can have only in the presence of a fully enlightened saint. I did not feel like talking, for to sit still was so restful and enjoyable.

In the evening, we accompanied Baba to the beautiful Ashram garden. It was a rare privilege to be with Baba and

enjoy his exclusive attention. But the privilege was short-lived, for soon other devotees found their way to the garden and sought Baba. Such is the divine magnetism of the Saint that wherever he is in the seventeen acres of the Ashram, the devotees are bound to seek him out and flock around him—like the bees swarming around the beehive.

As the devotees sat around Baba, he asked each of them about his health or family or job or business or talked about their other individual problems as if he knew the devotees intimately. When they laid their problems before him, he advised them with such expert and thorough knowledge of the subject that I was astounded at his versatility and sagacity. He had an answer for everybody and his simple explanations seemed to satisfy them. I could see that he was highly respected and nobody dared take liberty with him. On spiritual matters, he spoke with such clarity, depth and power that the most abstruse spiritual truths became easy to understand and left a deep impression on my mind.

The next morning when I went to the main hall for Baba's *darshan*, he asked me to sit near him and instructed Amma (Miss Pratibha Trivedi who is known as Amma in the Ashram) to play tape-recordings of *Ram-dhoon* and some devotional songs. Immediately, without any effort on my part, I went into meditation and remained in that state for nearly an hour. I had lost all consciousness of the outer world and was immersed in blissfulness. At partial consciousness I felt profuse tears flowing from my eyes and tremors in the body. When I regained complete consciousness I experienced peace and tranquillity of mind, as never before. This effect con-

tinued for some days even after I left the Ashram. This was my first experience of effortless meditation in the presence of Babaji. Being thus blessed by him I left the Ashram after a brief stay of one day and Baba, in his usual characteristic style asked me to visit the Ashram again for a longer stay and I promised to come again accordingly.

My next meeting with Baba was at Nareshwar where he was invited by Sri Rang Avadhoot, the well-known saint of Gujarat. I had there the experience of his intuitive knowledge about those with whom he comes in contact. He astounded me by enquiring about the illness in my family for I had never given him any hint about my family affairs. My wife has been suffering for the last six to seven years from sciatica. I had to confirm her illness giving details of her trouble and Baba gave a *mantra* for her and by the *mantra-japa* she is gradually feeling better.

Through Baba's grace once again I had the spontaneous blissful meditation, on one of the few days of his stay at Nareshwar. This experience was however different from the previous one. It was night time. The devotees took leave of Baba for their nightly rest. When my turn came to take leave, Baba asked me to sit. Baba was resting on his bed, in the open. The surrounding atmosphere was very calm and peaceful, and it was a moon-lit night. Soon I found myself in a state of deep meditation. Time was fleeting rapidly. Two hours seemed only a few minutes. I experienced complete stillness of mind and felt extremely refreshed.

I visited Shree Gurudev Ashram for the second time in the first week of

May. This time, I stayed there for ten days. One day, as I sat near Baba in the main hall, I was immediately induced to a contemplative mood and deep effortless meditation. For about an hour, I was in this state experiencing lightness of body and tremors in *Muladhar Chakra* at intervals.

On another occasion Baba gave me the privilege of meditating in his special *Dhyan*-room. As I sat in this room, which is full of strong spiritual vibrations, I felt great discomfort for about five to ten minutes and felt like running away. However, after about ten minutes, I started feeling quite relaxed. Soon peace and calmness descended on me, and my body became as light as a feather. The throbbing in *Muladhar chakra* was experienced from time to time and there were occasional jerks in the body also. I was in deep meditation for about one and a half hour and could have sat for a longer period, had not my friend made me conscious of the time that had passed out. It was indeed a blissful experience.

I feel distinct improvement in my *sadhana* after this second visit. I experience peace and happiness in life. The mind has become calm and equanimous. Somehow, Baba remains constantly in my mind and I do not like to talk about anything except Baba and his powers. I am in complete tune with the new *mantra* with which he initiated me. It is so powerful that I feel exuberant with energy all the time.

During my ten days' stay at the Ashram, I was greatly impressed and influenced by the disciplined daily life of the ashramites. Not only the timings for getting up and going to

bed, lunch and dinner, *arti* and *satsang* are fixed but everyone realises the importance of silence, meditation, regularity and helpfulness. The daily routine and the discipline are not imposed on the visiting devotee but he falls in line of his own accord and benefits thereby. Baba takes interest in and supervises everything personally. He also sets an example in punctuality, thoroughness, and self-discipline for others to follow. As an example of his personal interest in everything, I would mention that he has trained the Ashram boys in *yogasanas* which they practise daily, performing nearly hundred *asanas* including difficult ones such as *Baddha Mayurasana* and *Vrischikasana* with remarkable ease and accuracy.

I have visited almost all well-known spiritual centres of our country, but nowhere have I experienced such a tranquil and peaceful atmosphere, which induces *Dhyan* so spontaneously, as breathed in Shree Gurudev Ashram. Even the plants in this Ashram, also enjoy the effect of Shaktipat. Baba has often remarked that the effect of Shaktipat is not only felt in human beings, but also in animals, plants and vegetation. This is confirmed by the rich and luxuriant growth of plants and orchards of the Ashram.

I had the good fortune of attending Baba's birthday celebration. It was for the first time that the devotees celebrated the day in a grand manner. For me it was really a memorable day. The Ashram was crowded with the devotees, each one carrying flowers, fruits and choice gifts in their hands, awaiting the turn to offer the same to the beloved Gurudev. After everyone paid their

obeisance, Babaji spoke a few words befitting the occasion, briefly as follows: "The greatest wonder in this world is nobody remembers he is going to die one day. Rather one lives and acts as if one is going to live for ever. He forgets that he came into the world with a return ticket. In the *Gita* Lord Krishna says, 'Certain is the death of the born'— जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युः। One does not know when one is going to die. It might even be soon. The year, the day, and the hour are fixed for everyone, according to one's destiny. Only the enlightened souls know about their time of death. As they have conquered death they live happily, enjoying their remaining *prarabdha* (fate), without any fear. Even while doing their duties they are aware that everything is perishable. My advice, therefore, to you all is ever keep in mind two things—one is death and another is God. It is only God who can help you to free yourself from the cycle of birth and

death. My dear ones, pray God and rise above all kinds of fear."

Baba is extremely well-versed in scriptural lores and some of his discourses are rich in quotations from different scriptures and well-known works of poet saints, displaying marvellous feat of his memory. His wits and humour delight his devotees many a time. Baba has a divine personality, for a true seeker immediately feels oneness with him. He is approachable by rich and poor alike and he showers his grace equally on all, though one may receive it according to one's receptivity and capacity to surrender.

For the spiritual growth of an individual, a living Master's guidance is essential. In this age of materialism, one can hardly come across a Master like Muktananda Baba. Shree Gurudev Ashram, where the sincere seekers get valuable help at his feet, is therefore bound to become one of the greatest spiritual centres in time to come.



A child and a great saint are similar in a way. Incidents interest a child only so long as they last. It ceases to think of them after they have passed away. So then, it is apparent that they do not leave any impression on the child and it is not affected by them mentally. So it is with a saint.

—Sri Raman Maharshi

THE WAY THE SPIRIT LEADS

by SHAHID PRAVIN (CALCUTTA)

Shri Shahid Pravin is the regional directorate of the National Productivity Council, Calcutta. He is also the Chairman of Subud India.

How I came to Ganeshpuri, cannot be told without recounting a few of the incidents which led me to the path of spiritual quest.

In my youth I was indifferent to religion. Because I did not want to offend my parents, I used to visit temples on auspicious occasions and partake in the religious ceremonies done at home. I did ask God for favours, that was what God was meant for.

In 1932 after I left college, I happened to read Leon Trotsky's *My Life* which opened the flood gates of materialistic reasoning. I read avidly Marx, Engels, Lenin, the Masters. I became a non-believer with iconoclastic zeal. Spirit did not matter, because I felt matter accounted for everything. God as a hypothesis was not required to solve the problems of life. Organisation could do things better.

In 1938 something happened which started creating doubts in my mind. One day when I was in the office I knew something happening at home. Several members of the family with whom I was staying and some members of the landlord's family were discussing about my photograph, which hung on the wall, how I looked in real life and how I looked in the photograph. I did not see a vision, I did not hear voices, but I knew, in the full measure of the term knew, without any agencies of sense

perception, the incident, the words, the people who uttered those words. Being curious of such a phenomenon I noted the time from my watch and recorded the facts I knew, the persons, the words. On returning home at night I assembled the persons concerned and with my attitude of scientific reasoning verified the facts and to my surprise what I knew was truth. Extra sensory perception! Does matter possess such faculties or is matter something else or is there something beyond matter? These were doubts which started coming in my mind one after the other.

Books on psychology, philosophy, metaphysics, mysticism, subjects which had evaded my attention caught my imagination. I read these with the same amount of gusto, characteristic of a young mind, with which I had tackled dialectical materialism. A very confused picture of the world emerged. I could not mistrust the integrity of the authors, they were respected savants in their respective fields and I could not for one moment think that they would stoop to misguide the world.

On several other occasions I intuitively started knowing things happening at a distance, particularly happenings and conversations at my home in Kerala which I used to get verified by writing to my father.

In 1941 I went to Colombo for a

period of six months in connection with my work as internal auditor for an American Oil Company, leaving my wife at Calcutta with her parents. During this time my wife fell sick. Neither she nor her parents wrote anything about these happenings at home thinking that such news would upset me. Then one day, I experienced again the phenomena of knowing things happening at a distance, I knew or felt my wife was terrifically ill and was sinking. I sent a cable, followed it up with a letter stating that my wife was critically ill at such and such a time and asking for information about her present condition. I got an apologetic reply that she was particularly ill at the time I cabled and that she was gradually improving.

Books on Yoga, particularly by Paul Brunton, Theos Bernard, and others, books on Theosophy and Tibetan Mysticism followed in the wake of these amazing experiences. Still I could not gain the secrets, books offered no practical clue to attain or exercise such powers at will. Though I did not start looking for masters, none appeared either.

In 1951 I was in Delhi, a friend in Calcutta Dara N. Shroff sent me as a gift P. D. Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous* which he had recently come across. We shared books and a wide variety of common interests. Blessed he is for that kind gesture. It opened my eyes to the truth that there could be masters and schools even in these times. I read all the books written by Ouspensky and Gurdjieff and books about them by others and as a consequence I started looking for spiritual teachers.

In the meanwhile on my birthday

some members of my staff gave me as a presentation Paramhansa Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*, and promptly on our arrival in Calcutta, Swami Atmananda Giri, the then head of Yogoda Math initiated me and my wife in *Kriya Yoga* which I practised for several years thereafter with peace and prosperous conditions followed. In 1958 on the initiative of some of my friends I was introduced to another teacher from West Bengal who initiated me in *Sahaja* or *Swabhavik Yoga* which again brought a series of crisis in my life.

It was in March 1960 the major turning point in my spiritual pursuit occurred. I had earlier read a review of J. G. Bennett's book *Concerning Subud* in a Newspaper published from England. That introduced me to the name of Pak Muhammad Subuh and the system Subud with the spiritual exercise of *Latihan*. I read in a Calcutta Newspaper in the personnel column a small insertion "Subud Pak Subuh arriving in Calcutta March 31, those interested please contact Box No. —". I later on came to know that I was the only person who responded to this advertisement inserted by the Subud Group in Calcutta. As a result of this my wife and I were opened in Subud in Calcutta on March 25, 1960. Bapak arrived in Calcutta a few days thereafter.

In my first three *Latihans* I had no movements or reactions. In fact I recognised later that I had not surrendered. I was stealthily with half opened eyes watching from time to time others in the group making movements which seemed funny to me but at the same time I knew they were not deliberately making these movements under the influence of something and I was pre-

occupied with the thought of discovering a scientific explanation. On the fourth day of my *Latihan* when we arrived at the Arnold's, Bapak's hosts in Calcutta, Bapak was sitting as usual in the drawing room surrounded by Subud members. When we entered the room Bapak's eyes caught mine, he smiled meaningfully at me. I felt a clicking sound in my head in the medulla oblongata and my soul separated from my body. When I sat down I could see my body sitting, I the real I away from it. I felt I could discard the body if I wished, because I was real, immortal, the body only a cloak and with that realisation came the bubbling sense of happiness which I had read only previously as *ananda*, but which I now experienced. I knew I had the source of all wisdom within me and with that realisation flowed the sense of real power and happiness. That day's *Latihan* was terrific, my body made violent movements, my surrender to the force was complete. This experience continued for the next twenty-four hours almost. I, a timid driver, could during that period drive at any speed because I felt I was not driving, but someone else. I recounted this experience to Bapak in 1964 when he came to Calcutta for the first Subud Congress to ask him whether it was a genuine spiritual experience or imagination, he confirmed it was genuine and that I was fortunate in having this experience. I consider Subud one of the most precious gifts I had received in this life, an opportunity to purify oneself of impurities and to receive the grace of the life force.

In the beginning of 1966 my work took me to Baroda. All my evenings I spent with the local Subud Group at

the house of Shri Ramesh Chandra Amin. Mr. Amin mentioned about the experience of Albert Rudolph, a Subud, in the latest issue of *Guruvani* a copy of which he lent me and I read all the articles in that issue with great interest. I immediately wrote to the Ashram at Ganeshpuri expressing my desire to visit the place and reply came with the utmost promptitude welcoming my visit. Unfortunately I could not visit Ganeshpuri then.

However on April 2, 1966 the cherished desire was fulfilled. At about mid-day I reached Ganeshpuri accompanied by my brother-in-law Shri Ramchandra Menon from Bombay and we were straight away taken to the room where Swami Muktananda was sitting with the devotees. We were welcomed with the characteristic benevolence which Babaji's disciples know. Babaji was chatting pleasantly with the devotees asking questions, answering questions and I was all the time receiving. It is a characteristic feature of Ganeshpuri that one receives effortlessly throughout the Ashram premises. The radiations are so powerful that one feels the flow of the Shakti all through. That day and the next morning I spent several hours with Babaji who asked me to tell about Subud, took me around to show the pictures of the Saints hanging around the walls of the Ashram, the orchard and the flowering shrubs explaining that the flow of the divine force accounted for the rapid growth of these at Ganeshpuri. I felt the same warmth of affection, the flow of spiritual love and compassion which I used to feel in the presence of Bapak. I felt here on earth are two kindred souls propagating the same truth, call it by different names if you like Chiti

Shakti, Kundalini or Life force, and the way *Siddhayoga*, *Kriyayoga*, *Sahajayoga* or *Latihan*. The same laughter, the same merry twinkle in the eyes when they joked with childlike simplicity, 'no holier than thou' attitude, but one clad in simple saffron robes of a *sannyasi* and the other in ordinary European style clothing. Babaji says that the final attainment is One, whichever path you may follow. Just as the Earth is one but there are different countries like India, Burma, Japan, Iran and others, created by men. So also God is One, while the different sects and religions are the creation of human beings.

I had cultivated the habit through our *Latihan* to receive with eyes closed, but at Gurudev Ashram I started receiving with eyes fully open. At times in the middle of conversation Babaji and I used to become quiet for a few minutes, then I would receive the flow of the divine force. Babaji explained that the Divine Essence is One and pervades the entire Universe. What is inside is also outside. In front or back, above or below, it is equally spread everywhere. Therefore, you can experience It even with your eyes open.

Babaji's respect for other saints and schools of thought was something which drew my reverence instinctively. Even in Subud I have of late come across tendencies, on the part of experienced helpers, of development of 'holier than thou' attitudes, imposition of rules, regulations, heirarchies, ten-

dency to put every other practice or system a pedestal lower without caring to investigate whether such arbitrary decisions are at all necessary. Here on the contrary is someone who chuckles with merriment telling the anecdote of an ascetic who had developed the powers to convert rags of paper into currency notes which retained their appearance for ten hours and who offered such notes to Babaji, and Babaji's refusing to accept, adding that genuine notes would start coming little later and that these counterfeit ones served no purpose. Immediately Babaji added with compassion that the ascetic was a good soul, Babaji knew him personally. The humility with which he spoke about his meetings with other saints and the saints who had visited the Ashram was touching.

In writing this short article, I want to express my reverence and gratitude to you, Babaji, for the kindness you showed and the constant sympathetic watch you are bestowing on this humble soul's path to self-realisation. Ganeshpuri through the life of Swami Nityananda and now with your presence is truly a place of pilgrimage for all who wish for spiritual solace.

The divine stream of life is flowing through all space. We are in our own way trying to become aware of it. Having become aware of it with varying degrees of success we want to get into it. In it, some swim, some splutter and dive, others float and lazily dream. How are we to say who is in it the most?



LETTERS

Following are the two letters from Albert Rudolph, New York, U.S.A.

My dear Babaji,

The daily process of my inner work is going along very well. I am making great effort to allow what by now I feel should be a most natural pattern of evolvment. If I do not allow any thinking or emotional evolvment but surrender to the *Shakti* my progress goes on to and through amazing and often otherwise impossible stages. Really, only by being nothing can this within me be prepared for the breakthrough.

Nearly a fortnight ago, during a class my tongue became active in making strange movements. I made a great effort to surrender and not identify with it. The activity in the tongue increased and became a snake which thrashed wildly for half an hour. For me it was a wonderful opportunity to not identify during a spiritual exercise and really nothing else. I feel there is never anything to dramatise as these incidents are merely tests of surrender and not to give life and properties to them.

A few days ago there were great shocks of pain like electricity going through my right arm and out of my finger tips. The same evening I had a student in my shop and as it was good for him to leave for home early I agreed to give him a class early and not wait for 8 P.M. when our group class meets. I suddenly found several customers come into my store and had the impulse to have the student sit about five feet from me. While these

people were looking about I rested my right hand on my knee leaving the fingers open and pointed towards this man. A heavy flow of force came through my fingers from my arm and sent a flow of force through this man. I had another student come by an hour later and as we talked I drew my fingers of the right hand around the top of his head which turned a bright red. He began to cry and later said he felt a great joy spread within him and was so grateful that he could not hold his tears back.

I have had two classes since this began and have been keeping my right hand open with an increase in the *shakti* during the class. Baba, how can I express my gratitude for the help you have given me. I realize that the opening of my understanding to the growth, which I will attain in the coming years, has helped to decrease the shock which accompanies these enlightenments.

Please give my best to all at the Ashram.

6-10-1965.

* * *

The intensity which my life has taken only speeds the process of my growth. The development of the "all seeing eye" you began in me seemed so remote two years ago when you spoke to me of this almost unbelievable gift. Now with your blessing in January and my being granted your *shakti* on a still higher level, I have to carry out the

spiritual work from an equally higher level. I feel now more inadequate than ever as I begin moving into this higher state and see my lack and can also begin to realise that my growth must be of faster and deeper quality to fulfil my potential. With no one to show most of my needs I again beg your love and blessing. It is very comforting to look at your photograph or visualize you at the Ashram.

The distance between two worlds makes the issue difficult for me. Therefore I have to do more intense work so that I can lift my *shakti* into heaven and

become worthy of friends and students.

More and more during classes and also while working alone I feel myself go spiritually into another dimension. I am changing very much in my ordinary life as it is lifting closer to this new level of spirituality. It is ever more obvious that I am most fortunate as I am nothing in myself.

My devotion and love to you and to all at the Ashram.

23-6-1966,
New York.

Your child,
RUDI
(Albert Rudolph)



*No use thinking lakhs of times, if you do not act for a single time.
No use observing silence continually, if you do not stop your wandering mind. No hunger can be satiated simply by binding a load of bread on the stomach.*

Thou shalt not go to heaven by lip service, it is by the practice of truth thou shalt be delivered.

—Guru Nanak

THEY ARE ALL ONE

by PRATAP YANDE

Gurudev Swami Muktananda Paramhansa has always been fond of meeting other Siddhas. It is a treat to hear his graphic description of the peculiar characteristics of different saints he has met so far. Besides his Guru Bhagwan Sri Nityananda, he has met Sri Siddharudh Swami of Hubli, Sri Upasani Baba of Sakori, Raman Maharshi, Narsing Swami of Pandharpur, Zipru Anna of Nasirabad, Harigiri Baba of Baijapur and many more Siddhas during the course of his wanderings and Sadhana. He looks at all of them as the different expressions of his Sadguru. He therefore never discourages his devotees from seeing other saints whenever possible. Similarly, disciples of other saints are also most welcome to his Ashram.

He never likes bigotry. Some days back an intelligent guest arrived at the Ashram. He said that he had spent two complete decades in the company of a great sage. The Ashram gave him its usual warm welcome and the guest was granted special audience by Baba. But during the talks it became clear that in the eyes of our guest everyone except his own Guru knew little or nothing about spirituality. Baba heard him patiently and finally came out with a wonderful discourse on *Guru* as expounded in the Marathi commentary on *Sadachar* by Sri Shankaracharya.

The subject-matter is a discussion between a Guru and his disciple, wherein the Guru himself advises that *Guru* is that universal power which can express

itself in many forms. It is that very power which animates the Universe. The most you may say is that for your limited understanding you identify that power with the individual who is or has been your spiritual guide. But that is the limit. To suppose that the power is restricted only to your Master's physical form is pure and simple ignorance. The Marathi commentary rightly says, "If as you feel, this one physical form alone is the Guru, what then is that power which is the life of all these different forms and also yours? Is it just a fake?"—

इतुकाचि औटहात गुरु । या सर्वोमाजी कोण गा चोर ।
आणि तुझ्या ठायींही विकार । कोठेनि आला वेगळा ॥

Baba dwelt at length on this basic maxim expounded by Sri Shankaracharya and further added that an aspirant who has such a narrow concept of Guru does not only prove his own ignorance but also that of his Guru, who should be held mainly responsible for the disciple's bigotry. Baba rounded up the discourse with the words that just as ether is one and the same everywhere, so is *Guru-tattva* same everywhere. In whomsoever it manifests it is always complete in itself. It may appear to be functioning more prominently through some, but the mission, the method and the essential nature of all Gurus are the same. All the Siddha-Gurus are therefore one in essence and it is sinful to compare one with another. May be, this scientific approach to

spiritual science is the basic strength of Shree Gurudev Ashram and has earned for it the blessings of all great saints.

This year the Ashram had the pleasure to receive some of the great saints of today. Among them Sri Rang Avadhoot Maharaj, the famous saint of Nareshwar in Gujerat could be said to have entered not just the premises of the Ashram but its very heart. The light of his illumined Self shining pure and bright through his divine personality, easily attracts others. The light and joy emanating from Gurudev Swami Muktananda Paramahansa have a similar effect on receptive minds. The meeting between these two saints was therefore a moment of delight and was celebrated with great *eclat* at the Ashram.

Sri Rang Avadhoot has a beautiful Ashram at Nareshwar on the banks of Narmada. This sacred river has mothered many a saint in its periphery, since centuries. The great saint of Nareshwar seems to be her present favourite because thousands go every year to Nareshwar to invoke his blessings. While travelling, his attendants find it a job to stave off devotees waiting in hundreds for his *darshan* at the railway stations en route. The venerable old sage holds a place of honour among the adepts of Shree Datta Cult and is worshipped as an incarnation of Lord Dattatreya.

Bhagwan Sri Nityananda used to say that Sri Rang Avadhoot was just another expression of his own. The people of Ganeshpuri experienced this identity when they saw Sri Avadhoot Maharaj during his recent stay at Ganeshpuri. At first his visit was a secret as he had expressed a desire to

be left alone for a little physical rest. But then the news of his arrival spread faster than wild fire and a time schedule had to be fixed to control the crowds that flocked for his holy *darshan* every day. Sri Muktananda Baba was at this time away on a pilgrimage down South but he returned to Ganeshpuri within about a week of Sri Avadhootji's arrival and accorded him a very warm and affectionate welcome on the 2nd of January at the Gurudev Ashram. The Ashram was beautifully decorated for the occasion which marked the memorable beginning of the new year. There certainly could not be a better dawn of a new year than the one made sublime by the meeting of these two self-realized souls who believed in and lived the creed of परस्पर देवो भव which means "Seeing each other as Expressions of God". That day Sri Avadhoot Maharaj stayed at the Ashram for about an hour or more and came again after a week to spend one full day. Literally hundreds came for his *darshan* throughout the day. Thereafter he informally visited the Ashram many times and each visit was a memorable experience.

Another great saint who happened to visit the Ashram at this time was Sri Ranchhod Bapu who is famous for his humanitarian activities such as eye-camps (नेत्रयज्ञ). So far he has sponsored eye-camps in many backward and interior areas of the country where hundreds of villagers and tribal folk were given free eye-treatment by renowned physicians and surgeons. This year he has organised food-supply (अन्नयज्ञ) for the famine-stricken villages in Orissa where Government machinery could not reach. Bapuji came to the Ashram on the evening of

19th January with a group of his devotees and stayed overnight. With him was also his worthy disciple Smt. Krishnakumari.

Since Sri Rang Avadhoot was also present in Ganeshpuri at this time the people of Ganeshpuri had the good fortune to witness the meeting of the three great saints—the good old Ranchhod Bapu, the venerable Sri Rang Avadhoot and Swami Muktananda Paramahansa. This *Trimurti-sangam* (meeting of the three holy sages) was like the *Triveni-sangam* (confluence of the three holy rivers) at Prayag where a large *Kumbha Mela* (gathering of saints and devotees) was being attended by thousands at this very time. Since even the holy places derive their holiness from great sages, the people of

Ganeshpuri were really lucky in getting all the benefits of the *Kumbha* fair in their home town by witnessing the meeting of the three Masters. It was pure good-luck, probably envied even by the Gods.

The meeting was an example in modesty, sincerity, simplicity and love. Each sage was humbler than the rest. Each proved by his unassuming attitude that the pride felt by a saint's followers for his individual self was their own imaginary creation while all Siddha-Gurus are one in essence. In other words, even though the rivers Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswati are no doubt holy individually, their confluence is many times holier. It not only washes your sins but also gives you absolute salvation.

Those who give themselves up to the Lord do more for the world than all the so-called workers. One man who has purified himself thoroughly, accomplishes more than a regiment of preachers. Out of purity and silence comes the word of power.

—Swami Vivekananda

ABOUT OUR ASHRAM

— ITS ESTABLISHMENT AND ACTIVITIES —

Before coming to the subject proper we deem it quite fit to give, in the beginning, Sri Gurudev's Message to the Trustees of the Ashram (published in our Fourth Annual Report). The illuminating message beautifully elucidates not only the aims and objects of Shree Gurudev Ashram but also tells in an extraordinary way how such ashrams come into existence, how our Hindu religion and culture are at their source, what purpose they serve and how they are to be managed.

The Message :

A person treading the spiritual path shown by the Guru and aspiring for Self-Realization undergoes many trials, tribulations and austere penance. If he sincerely follows his Guru's instructions, disciplines and teachings, he acquires Divine Shakti and in course of time people come to look upon him as a Mahatma inspiring faith, regard and love towards him.

The increase in the love of devotees towards him is followed by wonderful changes within the devotees' own hearts which deepen their faith in him. Out of this faith, they offer gifts-of-love at such a Mahatma's feet. Each one brings according to his capacity, aspirations and ideals. The various offerings reflect each devotee's feelings. Some bring clothes, some utensils, others cash or even precious jewels and still others construct buildings for the use of visitors who come for the Mahatma's *darshan*. Last year a devotee brought to me two hundred sarees to be given to poor women of the village. Another offered three hundred slates and books for school children. A third one brought tins of biscuits and sweets for children.

To make a fair and just use of the things which are thus offered with love, devotion and faith to the Mahatma, is indeed *Dharma* (righteousness). For instance, if a person does not recite the *mantra* received from a Mahatma according to the disciplines enjoined thereon, his worship stands desecrated and both the *mantra* and its ruling deity get slighted by the improper use. Similarly, the proper management and use of the vari-

ous offerings made by devotees is a religious duty. Their improper use or mismanagement is irreligious and could never be condoned.

It is not surprising if people develop faith in a Mahatma when they are impressed by the devotion of his worthy disciples and it is also not improper if this brings heaps of offerings at his feet. In fact, there is a saying that a Kingdom comes at the end of penance (तपान्ते राज्यम्). It is, therefore, quite natural that some Mahatmas might be found surrounded by such wealth which is an ancillary benefit derived from their life-long penance and austerities on the divine path, although their main object and reward is self-realization. The sweet mango fruit is the chief product of a mango tree while its twigs and leaves (which are useful as fuel) and its shade sheltering weary travellers in the hot sun, are its ancillary benefits. Similarly, Enlightenment is the main achievement of all sages and all other gifts which accumulate around them come to them unasked for. When it rains, the wind blows and coolness naturally spreads around; so also with the descent of God's grace, it is quite befitting that divine gifts are showered along with the grace. Saints, truly great as they are, neither rejoice nor desire nor even for a moment think about or look forward to these rewards. It is customary that the good and noble never go empty-handed to a saint because such an act is looked down upon as irreverent and against all good ethical etiquette. Because of this, even the Mahatmas have to accept such selfless offerings graciously. This is an

ancient custom and tradition, which has helped come into existence the Ashrams of great saints. It then becomes desirable to select intelligent, righteous and dutiful persons as trustees to look after the management of these Ashrams. It is the responsibility of the trustees to see that these things are taken good care of and put to the best possible use, because it represents devotees' love and charity. The trustworthy person to whom the Mahatma has entrusted this work is a *trustee* in the true sense. Really speaking one who is fully trusted by the Mahatma, who is devout and ready to serve, who will consider the Mahatma's wealth as that belonging to God and will utilize it for the general well-being or religious purposes alone, is a *trustee*.

The world is described differently by different persons. Lord Krishna calls it as existing in His own being (मद्भावा). The world is, therefore, the Lord's Divine Wealth. To the wise and enlightened ones this world is neither real, nor unreal, nor even a void. From this point of view it is not the property of any single individual or nation, nor does it belong to any particular leader. This world belongs to Him who has created it, namely the Creator.

Once a devotee from Secunderabad had come to see me. He belonged to a well-reputed and rich family, yet he begged of me, saying "Give me any old garment used by Bhagwan Nityananda". I asked, "Why?" He said, "I will consider it as Bhagwan Nityananda himself and not different from him. I want it as a *prasāda*". Now, look at this spirit of love and devotion for a saint! This brings to my mind another picture. Once I had been to Shirdi. There I saw torn clothes, worn out shoes, broken earthen pots, some old tobacco pipes—all well preserved in a glass cupboard as holy mementoes of Sri Sai Baba—for these were actually used by him at one time. Next, I visited a very close devotee of Sai Baba in the same town. There in his prayer room was kept a pair of very old shoes. On seeing them I enquired "whose are these and why are they worshipped?" The devotee explained: "The shoes are Sai Baba's precious property. I consider them to be his *prasāda* and with that sacred feeling I have preserved them carefully. The shoes bring

to my mind the ever-fresh memory of his holiness."

To make God the aim of all our endeavours, to perform every duty of ours as an offering to Him alone and with no other motive, is real worship. Actually, He is offered that which truly belongs to Him. Such a gesture of unselfish love is readily accepted. To know this secret of pleasing God is indeed *Jñāna* and *Vijnāna*. One who has this sight and knowledge will use Ashram's belongings carefully and that person is a *trustee* in the real sense. In any Ashram a person is appointed as a *trustee* not in recognition of his intelligence or to enhance his prestige, but because he has the sense of responsibility in managing things which belong to the Ashram, and consequently to God. A *trustee* should try to win over the confidence of both, the Guru and his devotees. The king should look upon the subject as his own children, the guru should look upon his disciple as his own self and similarly, it would be right if the *trustee* of a religious institute looks upon it, as if, it is his property and manages its welfare accordingly.

Foreigners who come to seek spiritual enlightenment are to be treated as our guests. Therefore, one should try to look to their comforts with the best possible means and also deal with them in a way befitting the noble and sacred tradition of the Ashram as well as the majestic dignity of our great Gurudev.

There are patriotic deeds for the prosperity, progress, happiness and general welfare of a nation, equally noble is the work to be done for the true happiness and peace of a soul. Nay, I would add that such work done for *Paramārtha* in the spirit of selfless service is not only desirable but it is the supreme duty and a worthy ideal for a human being to attain to.

Release from pain and attainment of absolute happiness is the highest purpose of the human life. Varied are the ways and means leading to *Paramārtha*, the supreme goal. In Shree Gurudev Ashram, an aspirant is put on the *Paramārtha* path by *Shaktipāt-dikshā* which makes everything simple and easy for him. After the *Shaktipāt-dikshā* one has to attain and stay steadfast in the state of true soul-awareness

through meditation and the Knowledge-of-self.

On the strength of spiritual power inherited from Sri Gurudev, the aim is to awaken the divine consciousness of aspirants and to make them enjoy the inner self-awareness, by giving them what they already possess (*prāpta*), by gratifying them who are ever satiate (*tripta*), by removing that (ignorance, darkness, etc.) which never existed (*nivritta*) and thus make them attain and maintain equilibrium of the mind under all conditions, favourable or otherwise. As a matter of fact, a man's aim is to obtain lasting divine joy. One cannot live if there is no joy in the heart. The life is lived to get joy and happiness, not to pass days weeping and wailing.

God pervades all living beings and every human form is His temple. A thoughtful person, faithfully treading the path shown by the Guru, can easily see God within himself. Even though the human soul is free of all bondages and is completely fearless by its inherent nature, a Guru is absolutely necessary for the ultimate knowledge of the Eternal.

Even in material life, right from our childhood until we become Engineers, Doctors, Writers or Artists, we have to learn all arts and sciences from teachers. We also become proficient in these sciences only after completing the full prescribed courses. If then a teacher is necessary to teach even these worldly sciences, is the spiritual science so insignificant that it needs no teacher or Guru? How could a man teach others if he has not been taught by a Guru?

As stated earlier, the aim and object in establishing Shree Gurudev Ashram is to guide aspirants along the spiritual path through the Divine Shakti obtained from Sri Gurudev. For the Ashramites, to abide by spiritual disciplines and to lead a disciplined and austere life, while carrying on the normal activities of the day, is in itself the worship of the Guru.

If out of their religious sentiments devotees feel like offering different things to the Guru, it is their pure and simple faith. Utilizing these things properly, without hurting the devotees' feelings and without attachment, does not in any way lower the

dignity, wisdom or spiritual heights of a Mahatma. If someone thinks this to be improper of him, I would say, it is due to one's ignorance of the inner purity, wisdom and intangibility of the Mahatma. Look at this vast and extensive Universe! It pervades in God, yet He is neither attached, nor even feel distressed. The Universe, in fact, is inseparable from God. Likewise, the Ashram and its spiritual head cannot be separated. How can a few trees or buildings in the Ashram then obstruct the divine work of a Mahatma? If these things prove to be an obstacle he is not a true Mahatma. The foolish find even a few hair on their head as a burden but the wise know them to be part of their body. Applying the same analogy this world is full of grief to the ignorant but to the wise it is blissful. Everything brings discredit to a person whose mind is impure. Mukta's heart being pure and mind non-attached (*mukta*) nothing ever goes wrong. For him the entire Universe is full of his Guru Nityananda and therefore ever blissful.

Dear trustees, the wealth and property offered to the Ashram Head, accumulates as a dedication to God. My cherished desire is "May you be successful in your noble ideal of their proper maintenance and welfare."

2nd March 1966

With blessings
SWAMI MUKTANANDA

Foundation of the Ashram :

Shree Gurudev Ashram was formally established and registered as a Public Trust in February 1962. But it came into being much earlier, for its foundation was laid by Bhagwan Sri Nityananda around the year 1949, when he got the three simple rooms built on the site of the present Ashram soon after Swami Muktananda met him at Ganeshpuri. He then asked Swamiji—his foremost disciple—to stay there. But actually Swamiji came to settle down in those rooms sometime in November 1956.

Prior to this period, Swamiji was staying either at Yeola or at Chalisgaon, where he has his *kutirs* and a large following of devotees too. He used to come to Ganeshpuri for his Master's *darshan*, and stayed in these rooms.

When he settled here permanently, the development of the Ashram began to take shape. Although, of course, it was Bhagwan Nityananda's hand that was shaping its future. Through his devotees Bhagwan got the ground near the three rooms filled and levelled and also a compound wall built. Then again, he got the structure which today is the *dhyan*-room of Swamiji, built by some devotees. Bhagwan Nityananda arranged for the transfer of the land and structure on Swami Muktananda's name.

Swamiji commenced the development of the place by busying himself raising a beautiful garden—planting a variety of fruits, flowers, trees and creepers. As time passed by and more and more devotees began to come for *satsanga*, Swamiji built a large audience hall and a few rooms for the devotees to stay. Again a spacious verandah was built on all sides of the *dhyan*-room for the *sadhakas* to use it for meditation. After a couple of years a storey was constructed above the main hall to make a separate arrangement for the ladies and where at present stays Amma. The other lady inmates of the Ashram also stay with her.

In the meantime, two acres of land was acquired behind Swamiji's cottage which has now been developed into an enchanting garden. A well was dug in a corner and other amenities were also provided for the devotees. Thus the growing spiritual centre was formed into an Ashram with Swami Muktananda as its spiritual head, to perpetuate and propagate the Gospel as preached by Bhagwan Nityananda who attained *Mahāsamādhi* on 8th August 1961.

Aims and Objects :

These are (i) परस्पर देवा मय (ii) सर्वदुःखनिवृत्त (iii) परमानन्दप्राप्ति—meaning (1) to realise Divinity in all, (2) to be free of all suffering and (3) to attain Supreme Bliss.

The main object of the Ashram is to do all that is conducive to the realization of the above ideals. The ultimate goal, as is clear from the aims and objects, is to widen the vision of every human being by realising Divinity in each other so that the rank passions like hatred, anger, jealousy, selfishness and religious bigotry are set at naught.

Towards this end Swamiji guides spiritual aspirants. He leads the *sadhakas* on the

path of Self-Realization by the spiritual process of *Shaktipāt*. He is highly proficient in this Science of *Kundalini Mahā Yoga*. He also propounds the philosophy of truth and universal brotherhood as enshrined in the Vedānta and literally lived by Bhagwan Nityananda. An interpretation of these teachings is found in Swamiji's two booklets *Ādesh* and *Amritvāni*.

The Ashram transcends all limitations of caste, creed and religion, and even narrow religious cults. The same is outlined and incorporated in the Constitution and Rules of the Trust.

Location :

Nestling on the lovely lap of a mountainous terrain—onlooking the *Mandāgni* mountain on the north-east, the hoary temple of Goddess Vajreshwari on the south-east, with a picturesque backdrop of low hills on the west—the Ashram is set like a jewel amidst green fields, beckoning all those who are in quest of peace and enlightenment. Even the winds which blow have a healing touch and the atmosphere exudes unspeakable peace. The well-kept little garden wafts fragrance, which stirs not only the senses but the soul.

Development of the Ashram :

The Ashram has made tremendously rapid progress in all spheres of its activity, within a short period of last four years. In the beginning of the year 1963, the late Shri M. S. Kannamwar, the then Chief Minister of Maharashtra State, visited the Ashram. He was highly impressed by the Ashram atmosphere and was amazed to see the charming little garden blooming with fragrant flowers and huge-size fruits. He wished and even insisted that Swamiji should purchase the adjoining land for the Ashram and offered to assist him in the matter if there was any difficulty in transacting that business. Swamiji took immediate decision and bought the adjoining plot, on the west, measuring fifteen acres. With this acquisition the Ashram area now admeasures eighteen acres.

Soon after acquiring the land, Swamiji arranged to get about nine acres converted into non-agricultural area and started the construction of cottages for the devotees, a

silent retreat for himself and a large meditation hall with marble floorings appropriately named as *Turiya Mandir*. It is a highly attractive and imposing structure of the Ashram. The *Turiya Mandir* is installed with a life-size portrait of Bhagwan Sri Nityananda in a silver frame, mounted on an exquisitely designed wooden dais, which bestows an air of sublime grandeur to the hall. Large photographs, of Bhagwan Nityananda in different poses, adorn the walls. Besides, there are chandeliers and a system of concealed lights which adds to its charm.

In the remaining six acres of agricultural land the Ashram cultivates rice during the monsoon every year. During other seasons cereals and vegetables are grown. Then again, Swamiji got planted about 500 saplings consisting of Mango, Cashew, Papaya, Coconut, Lemon, Guava and Eucalyptus so as to develop it into a beautiful penance-grove. The saplings of trees have already started yielding their fruits as though eager to make their offerings of love and gratitude to Sri Gurudev—a tribute to his divine potentiality.

In the meanwhile construction of other buildings was going on. So far six cottages are completed and they are named as Bhakti Kutir, Sadhana Kutir, Prem Kutir, Sneha Kutir, Sraddha Kutir and Sajjan Kutir. These are guest houses, well furnished and having all the modern amenities particularly for foreigners' comfortable stay. In addition to this a garage is built for Gurudev's car, a store-house for food-grains, and a shed for the cows. A new well—50 feet deep and 40 feet across—dug and built during the last year now meets nearly all the demand of water for the use of Ashramites, devotees, visitors, and the garden as well. The water from the wells is pumped up and stored in two big tanks, and from there it is supplied to each house through a network of lead pipes.

The Ashram at present gets a direct supply of electricity from the Maharashtra State Electricity Grid, formerly it had its own dynamo and generator.

Sri Gurudev's ever vigilant eye does not miss even the smallest detail. Perfection is his watchword and discipline is the dearest pattern of behaviour laid down by him.

Cleanliness, purity of mind and thoughts, mutual love and respect, and a bright outlook on life accompanied by a yearning for Truth are his guiding precepts. The atmosphere prevailing in the Ashram and around Sri Gurudev is radiant with happiness. That is why new visitors from far and near and also other spiritual centres pour in to have a glimpse of our Gurudev and his wonderful Ashram.

Management :

The affairs of the Ashram are entrusted by Gurudev to a Board of Trustees and to the members of Council. Both the above bodies meet periodically to deliberate upon matters regarding the Ashram.

To facilitate the smooth working, the council has formed the following three Sub-Committees :

(i) Sadhu Bhojan Sub-Committee : Sri Gurudev desired to continue Bhagwan Nityananda's tradition of feeding deserving monks and *sannyasins* visiting Ganeshpuri. Hence the Sadhu Bhojan Sub-Committee was formed to look after this work. It has made arrangements to feed *bona fide* sadhus coming to Ganeshpuri on pilgrimage from various parts of the country.

(ii) Library Sub-Committee : Donation by Gurudev of his private collection of books to the Trust formed the nucleus of the Ashram Library. Thereafter many devotees have enriched the library. It contains books on *Vedānta*, *Bhakti* and *Yoga*. There are also good many biographies of the saints and teachers of the various faiths of the world. Library gets religious periodicals also. This sub-committee is authorised to manage the Ashram's library. At present the library has 2500 books and every year new volumes are being added to it.

(iii) Publications Sub-Committee : It was felt that the teachings of Bhagwan Sri Nityananda and Swami Muktananda should be spread through the media of our own publications to the sadhakas and the seekers of Truth all over the world. Therefore, this sub-committee was formed. It has already published two booklets *Ādesh* and *Guru-premāmrit* (in English) from the original writings of Swamiji in Hindi. Besides, a decision was taken to bring out an annual magazine. Accordingly, the sub-

committee is publishing an annual issue, aptly named *Guruvani*, since last three years.

About Guruvani: This important official organ of our Ashram contains besides Sri Gurudev's writing many interesting articles by sadhakas and devotees narrating their own spiritual experiences and discoveries. The magazine is much appreciated by all and was even welcomed by other spiritual centres. It attracted many new aspirants to our Ashram to receive spiritual instructions from Sri Gurudev. An appreciation of *Guruvani* Vol. I appeared in *Mother India* January 1965 (Sri Aurobindo Ashram). Therein under the title of Spiritual Causerie the subject matter of the articles on Kundalini and Shaktipat are dealt with at length. A favourable review of the same also appeared in *The Vision* (Anandashram).

The second volume of *Guruvani* has proved better than the first, as it could be judged from the review appearing in *The Mountain Path* (Sri Ramanasramam) as follows:

"The first issue of the annual *Guruvani*, reviewed by us in October 1964, was excellent: the second is better. Well edited, well written, well got up, it sets a standard hard to emulate. The article by the editor herself, Pratibha Trivedi, on 'Kundalini Yoga' is a really masterly bit of work. Admirable too is M. P. Pandit's exposition of the need for a Guru.

The annual consists largely of reminiscences by devotees of Swami Muktananda, explaining how, by the power of Shaktipata he awakens the dormant Kundalini in a disciple and thereafter watches and guides its development."

In addition to the above, the publication committee has received a few letters of appreciation from India and abroad. Some extracts from these are given below:

Shri M. P. Pandit (Pondicherry) writes—"The second volume of *Guruvani* is magnificent and I am very happy to have it. It is a work of the first order. There are plenty of books and journals that preach philosophy but very few of this kind concentrating upon the practical aspect of Spiritual Quest. The collection of papers is interesting, instructive and valuable."

Mrs. Doris McNeil (Pennsylvania, U.S.A.) writes—"I read *Guruvani* from cover to cover when it came and was absorbed to read about the great-souled Bhagwan Sri Nityananda and his equally spiritual successor, your Sri Gurudev. Both my husband and I are impressed by the high note or tone of the magazine. My husband is a hard-boiled editor, not given to throwing literary compliments away, and he had only the finest things to say about the quality of the writing and editing."

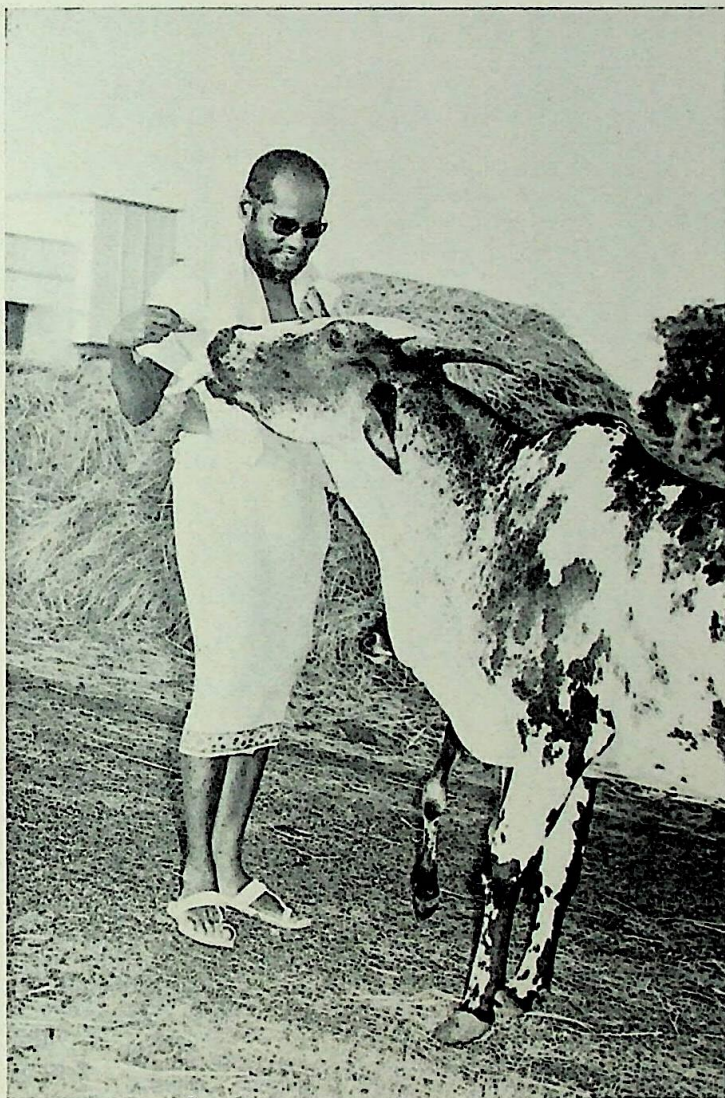
"Each article a little different message from God. And all are so interesting and well-written. Either you have a bunch of most literary contributors, or you have some top-notch editors. Anyway, my soul vibrates to know of your Ashram where there is great peace. I feel it. Also the joy there, the gaiety, and the sense of humour. Please tell Swami Muktananda I chuckle just to think of this quality of his."

Terence J. S. Gray (Monte Carlo, France) writes: "I am most grateful for the copy of *Guruvani* which you kindly sent me at the instance of Mr. Arthur Osborne. May I congratulate you on such a remarkable production, containing so many articles, all of great interest. I am indeed glad to know that such important work is taking place in India, and if I should come to Bombay I hope you will allow me to come and pay you a visit."

Inmates of the Ashram:

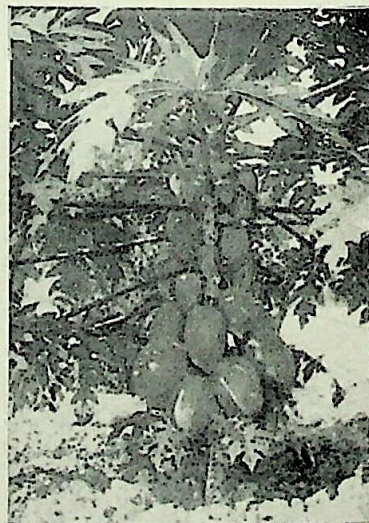
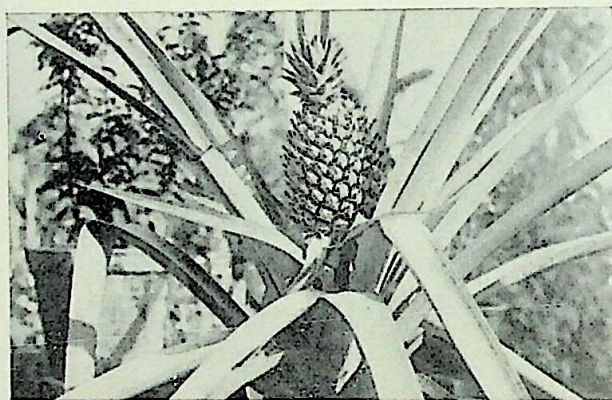
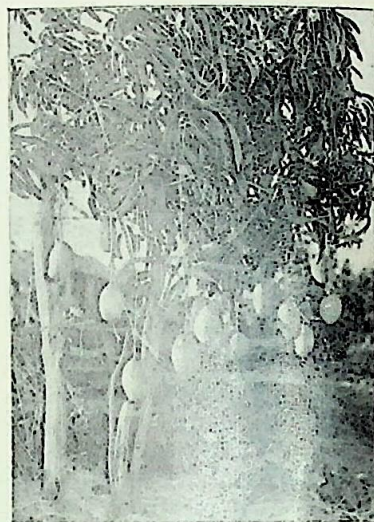
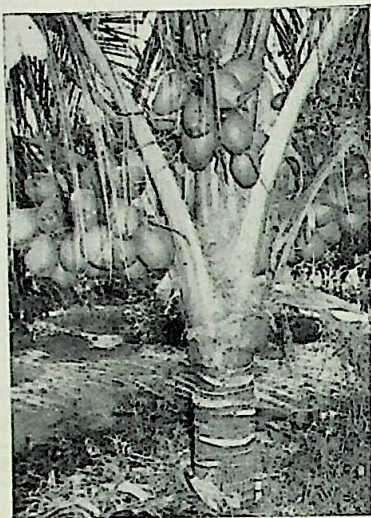
Day-to-day work is carried on by the Ashramites—both men and women—with dignity, decorum and discipline under the guidance of Sri Gurudev. The Ashram, being quite a large establishment with a fairly extensive garden, requires proper and constant attention everyday in the matter of cleanliness and up-keep, nurturing of the garden, looking after guest houses, distribution of *prasāda* to all the children who attend the *ārati*, the preparation of wholesome food for the inmates, attending to the visitors and guests, issuing of the library books, going through the correspondence, and giving free medicines to the poor villagers.

The inmates also include some boys of the locality who attend the school during the day. They are well trained by Sri Guru-



BABA fondling with the ashram's cow Lakshmi

Ashram's Luxuriant Orchard



(Top left) Branches of cocoanut on a small tree

(Top right) Tiny tree yielding mangoes by dozen

(Centre) Juicy Pineapple welcomes the visitors

(Bottom left) A rare variety of pineapple

(Bottom right) Cluster of Papayas on a single trunk

dev in chanting holy Sanskrit verses and the prayers during the morning and evening *ārati*. These boys are methodically and systematically taught all the 84 *āsanas* under the supervision of Sri Gurudev. They have learnt this in a remarkably short period of four months. It is a sight to see them perform the *yogasanas*. This feature has recently been added to their all-round training programme.

Sacred Festivals and Notable Events :

In keeping with our ancient tradition, which is being followed in almost every *math* and *ashram*, certain sacred days are observed with great spiritual fervour and *eclat*—when the Ashram is decorated with flowers, fruits, and festoons by the enthusiastic devotees. These auspicious days are *Mahashivratri*, *Gurupurnima* and Bhagwan Nityananda's *Punyatithi* which are duly celebrated by the devotees with deep faith and devotion. On such sacred occasions, the devotees pour in large numbers to perform *pūja* and *arati* of Sri Gurudev and offer their humble obeisance. One experiences subtle vibrations in the atmosphere, which fills one's heart with long lasting joy, on these days. Among other festivals celebrated are *Gudi Padva*, the New Year in Maharashtra; *Krishna Janmashtami*, and the *Dassera* and *Deepavali*.

On such occasions, as above, usually there are *bhandāras* (partaking of food) served to all the devotees. Sri Gurudev freely distributes clothes to the poor men, women and children—of the villages around. All the boys and girls of the locality, who are attending the schools, are given cloth for making uniform school dresses. Then again, Sri Gurudev gives them sweets and crackers during the *Deepavali* festival.

This year's high light was the celebration of our Gurudev Swami Muktananda's birthday on *Vaisakhi Purnima* with great love and devotion. The day began with the recitation of *stotras* and sweet music was played on *Shehnai*. This was followed by the offering of *pūjā*, *ārati*, flowers, etc., to Sri Gurudev. The members of the council and other devotees too have expressed their desire to celebrate this day each year.

The notable event of the year was the experiment of *Kaya-kalpa* (rejuvenation)

conducted by the Vaidyas connected with the Ayurved Bhavan, Bombay-16. It so happened that some Vaidyas of Ayurved Bhavan were in search of a suitable place for carrying out the *Kuti-pravesh* experiment (which formed an important part of the entire *Kaya-kalpa* treatment). They found Shree Gurudev Ashram, together with its natural surroundings, the most suitable place for it. And therefore, they approached Sri Gurudev to allow them to conduct this experiment in the Ashram precincts. The permission being granted they built the special *Kuti* and the person on whom the experiment was being conducted was kept for two and a half months in it from 1st of February till 14th of April 1966.

During this period many eminent Vaidyas and Medical men, as well as the State Ministers visited the place. They were all very much pleased to see the Ashram and were happy for the kind co-operation and valuable guidance received from Sri Gurudev, time and again. To express their feeling of gratitude the Vaidyas wrote and sent a felicitous letter as reproduced below :

"Maha Yogiraj Sri Muktananda Maharaj,

In an attempt to revive our old science of Ayurveda, we carried out an experiment on *Kaya-kalpa* during last one year and attained a fair measure of success in it. In this context, please allow us to state that but for your blessings, valuable advice and co-operation given from time to time, the experiment would have never been successful.

Your untiring zeal for work and ever-readiness to extend help to a good cause have set an unforgettable ideal before us. Your love for and knowledge of Ayurveda are too well-known to be mentioned. It was our good fortune to get the benefit of that knowledge and we are highly indebted to you for the same.

Vaidya Veni Madhav Shastri

" Narayan Hari Joshi

" Dhondo Sadashiv Antarkar"

Dated 24th April 1966 :

Distinguished Visitors :

Every year many notable personalities, saints, sannyasins and foreign sadhakas visit

Shree Gurudev Ashram. Among them were :

Godavari Mata, the spiritual head of Kanyakumari Ashram at Sakori, accompanied by a group of her followers, had come to the Ashram and was impressed by the serene and peaceful atmosphere of the place.

A saint of Gujarat Shri Chunilal Bhagat, better known as *Mota*, accompanied by a band of his devotees, paid a visit to our Ashram in September last year.

Shri Gurudial Mallik, a well known sufist saint who has spent his life in selfless service of humanity—came twice during last year to spend a few days in the holy company of Sri Gurudev.

This year commenced with all the auspiciousness as a saint of eminence Sri Rang Avadhut Maharaj of Nareshwar came here and sanctified the place. He was accorded a grand reception by the devotees at Shree Gurudev Ashram. He stayed at Vajreshwari for one month. Swamiji and Avadhutji used to meet every day with deep mutual respect. As an outcome of this meeting a bond of love is established between them and their devotees.

During the time that Sri Rang Avadhut Maharaj was here another great saint Sri Ranchhod Bapu of Chitrakut visited our Ashram and stayed overnight. He seldom stays for more than three days at one place. Always moving, he sponsors *netra-yajna* at different places every year.

This was followed by the visit of yet another known personality, Yogiraj Sri Gulvani Maharaj. He has established his ashram—named Shree Vasudev Nivas—at Poona, where spiritual aspirants can easily get Yoga initiation.

Then in the month of March, Shri Tukdoji Maharaj, an old acquaintance of our Gurudev, came to meet him. He is a well-known saint; a patriot, poet and literary man. His ashram is at Varkhed in Khandesh from where he publishes a monthly named 'Gurudev'. He has been honoured as Rashtriya Sant by the government and was elected as president of the Vishwa Shanti Parishad held in Japan. He is now organizing a congregation of all Sai devotees at Shirdi.

From Trivandrum, Swami Abhedananda

of Abhedashram came here last year during his pilgrimage on foot.

Swami Vibudhesh Tirtha, the Madhva-charya of Admar Math, Udipi paid a few visits to our Ashram in last two years, to meet Sri Gurudev.

Shri Sai Sharananandaji, a direct disciple of Sri Sai Baba of Shirdi, had come in July last year. Everyone was delighted to hear from him some of Sai Baba's anecdotes. He is quite aged and stays in Ahmedabad.

Ma Gayatri Devi of Anand Ashram (California, U.S.A.) paid a visit to our Ashram with a group of her disciples, in January last year. Shri Gurudial Mallik accompanied them. They had *satsang* with our Gurudev and before parting she sang Bengali *Bhajans*.

Ma Yogashakti of Bihar School of Yoga specially came to our Ashram in last October to extend an invitation to Sri Gurudev to The Second International Yoga Convention at their yoga centre in Monghyr, Bihar.

Swami Narayan Tirth—a disciple of Swami Shanker Purushottam Tirth—who is the head of Siddhayogashram, Varanasi paid us a visit in November last year. He was deeply impressed by the beautiful atmosphere and spiritual discipline prevailing in the Ashram. Subsequently, he wrote us a letter expressing his admiration from which we are glad to quote, "I was very much delighted to see the situation and well-planned development of the Ashram as well as the excellent facility for sadhakas. Furthermore, I was happy to know that the deserving aspirants are initiated into the *Siddhayoga*. This is an highly praiseworthy, sacred spiritual service for which I send my hearty good wishes to Sri Muktanandaji Maharaj."

This year Swami Ramananda Tirth of Hyderabad (Ex.-M.P.) had come to our Ashram. He is a very learned person. Aroused by patriotic feelings he has rendered a lot of service to the Nation, and is known for his work.

Shri K. K. Shah (M.P.), who was till recently the General Secretary of All-India Congress Committee, never fails to pay a visit to Sri Gurudev whenever he finds time from his busy life. He is a sadhaka and has great interest in yoga. He has deep respect for our Gurudev and seeks his

guidance. His article "In Search of Heavenly Bliss," appeared in *Guruvani*, Vol. I, from which we are pleased to quote the following: "Swamiji's understanding, his balanced mind and his anxiety to give rather than to take removed all traces of hesitation and cemented my urge to know him and to listen to him. . . . In my anxiety to know him better, when I demonstrated my little knowledge of *sādhana* I was taken aback by his versatile mind and advanced knowledge of Yoga. Since then I have neither doubted his judgement nor his capacity to transcend human limitations."

Last year in June, Shri Vijayadev Yogendra, who has established a Yoga Education Centre at Melbourne, Australia paid a visit to our Ashram. His institution has flourished well and he has earned a reputation in Australia. Even so, he was all praise for our Gurudev, for he could see the importance of Shaktipat-diksha in the awakening of Kundalini Shakti. Before departure he expressed his desire that when he comes to India next time he would spend some days in Shree Gurudev Ashram.

Mr. Anthony Brooke, ex-ruler of Sarawak State, came twice during last year, to have *satsang* with Sri Gurudev. First time he came just for two days and was much delighted to have met him. Second time he specially flew from Malayasia to stay here for ten days. This time he had very interesting talks with Sri Gurudev on *Avatārvād*, awakening of mass consciousness, one world with one government, one religion, etc.

During last year, Nareilwala Baba of Lasalgaon came for Sri Gurudev's *darshan*. He is known to possess certain siddhis.

Prof. Balkrishna (now Swami Nirmalananda), a student of Zen Philosophy, who has recently founded an Ashram (International Abode of Peace, Biligiri Hills, Mysore), while on his lecture tour came and stayed for a couple of days in our Ashram. He had discussion with Sri Gurudev on the comparative aspect of Zen Buddhism and Vedanta Philosophy and was impressed by Gurudev's direct answers.

In July last year, Ma Feroza Taleyarkhan of Sri Ramanashramam, Tiruvannamalai had come for Sri Gurudev's *darshan*. She is staying in the Ramanashramam for last

twenty-five years and is known for her great love and devotion to Maharshi. Among the trustees of the Ashram she is an active member who is looking after the construction at Samadhi Mantapam. On meeting our Gurudev here, she was deeply moved by his loving personality.

Among many foreign visitors this year was Mr. Edward Banks, Chairman of the Vegetarian Society of England. During his talk he was very much pleased to know the views and scientific approach of Sri Gurudev in support of vegetarian food, specially when he explained its beneficial effect on the subtle vitality and the human brain.

Mr. Arthur Osborne of Sri Ramanashramam who is the Editor of *The Mountain Path*, came here accompanied by his wife during the Shivratri festival. They admired the happy atmosphere prevailing among the devotees over here and carried a vivid impression of their brief stay in our Ashram. Mr. Osborne's article appears in this issue.

Shri D. R. Bendre a foremost writer in Kannada and a good poet, who was awarded a prize by the Sahitya Academy, came to meet Swamiji in June this year. He was pleased to see the Ashram.

Acharya Atre, the well-known literary figure in Marathi literature came this year for Sri Gurudev's *darshan*.

Certain foreigners come to Sri Gurudev for spiritual guidance and usually they stay here for sometime in order to receive and imbibe inner peace and joy as well as knowledge about the nature of Divinity. In recent years we had some persons from abroad in our Ashram. One of the frequent visitors was Miss Hilda Charlton of California who used to stay for some days for her *sādhana* in the presence of Sri Gurudev. She had some nice experiences which are described in her article—'A Glimpse of the Master'—published in *Guruvani*, Vol. I.

Since last six years, Mr. Albert Rudolph of New York comes every year to spend a few days with his Gurudev. His interesting article 'Miracle of the Awakened Kundalini' appeared in *Guruvani*, Vol. II. Two of his letters to Gurudev are published in this issue, and some of his letters were published in *Guruvani*, Vol. I.

A young American lady, Miss Laressa Gahan from Florida, after a stay of more than a year in the Ashram returned to her country in 1965. She wrote a brief article in the form of a letter on "Dear Baba" in *Guruvani*, Vol. I.

Sometime back Smt. Draupadi Singh of Trinidad, West Indies, came to have Gurudev's *darshan*. She found what she was seeking for the last ten years in India and so she stayed in the Ashram for nine months. Her beautiful article 'On the Path of the Master' appeared in *Guruvani*, Vol. II. She left for her country in October with a desire to return soon.

An English couple Mr. Mark and Gita Obel from Johannesburg, South Africa paid their first visit to our Ashram in January 1965. In February they came again and stayed for some days in the Ashram till the Shivaratri celebrations. Their articles 'In Search of a Guru' and 'This is the Beginning, not the End' by the wife and the husband respectively were published in *Guruvani*, Vol. II. This year they came in June and stayed for some days to have the benefit of Sri Gurudev's Divine company. Mrs. Gita's second article appears in the present volume of *Guruvani*.

Among other foreigners were Manuel Doncel from Southern France and Maurice Ishay, a *hathayogi* from Australia.

Sri Gurudev's Yatra :

Besides Sri Gurudev's short visits to Bombay, Trimbakeshwar and other places the outstanding event of this year was Sri Gurudev's visit to Hyderabad and a pilgrimage to South India : On 7th November Sri Gurudev left by plane for Hyderabad accompanied by Amma and Shri Yogendrabhai. He was given a grand send-off at Santa Cruz aerodrome by a large number of devotees and was accorded at the Hyderabad airport an equally hearty welcome. Sri Gurudev inaugurated Shri Pravina Mody's bungalow in Hyderabad named as *Muktashram*, and stayed there as his guest till 3rd December.

On 3rd of December Sri Gurudev and a party of 60 members left Hyderabad for *Sri Sailam*, from where on 6th December a group of 12 persons left on a tour of South India led by Sri Gurudev. They proceeded

first to Bangalore. Our council member, Shri K. S. Shetty, flew to Bangalore to make special arrangements in advance, and at his instance Sri Gurudev stayed as a guest of Shri M. V. Gopinath—a well-known businessman of Bangalore. Besides Shri N. K. Boman Behram and Shri Lakshmansa Khoday (a trustee of Shree Bhimeshwar Sadguru Nityananda Sanstha of Ganeshpuri), Dr. Nagappa Alva—the Health Minister of Mysore State—came for Sri Gurudev's *darshan*. On the invitation of Shri Boman Behram Sri Gurudev visited his Agricultural Estate on the outskirts of Bangalore city.

Next, Sri Gurudev and the party started for their pilgrimage and visited many holy places such as Chidambaram, Tanjore, Trichinopoly, Srirangam, Palani, Madurai, Rameshwaram, Kodaikanal, Courtalam, Kanya Kumari, Guruvayur, Ootacamund, Mysore, Nandi Hills, Halebid, Velur, Sravanbelgola, Harihar, Hospet, Hampi, Bijapur, Tuljapur, Pandharpur and returned to Ganeshpuri via Poona on 1st January 1966.

During the tour Sri Gurudev and the party visited some spiritual centres and ashrams like Ramanashram, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and the Arani Ashram of Muppi Nair Swamy. At the Ramanashram, Sri Gurudev was given a grand reception by the President and inmates and Ma Taleyarkhan. Some foreign visitors had good *satsang* with our Gurudev.

On the 30th of March, Sri Gurudev along with a group of about fifty devotees had gone to Saptasringi, the famous *Shakti Peetha* situated on a mountain near Nasik ; to fulfil a long standing promise to visit the ashram of Swami Prakashanandji, one of the oldest disciples of Sri Gurudev. Swamiji gave a grand reception in honour of his Guru and had arranged *pujā*, chanting of Vedic *mantras* by the Brahmins to the tune of the music flowing through *shehnai*, spelling the auspicious hour. There were *Bhandāras* too. Sri Gurudev also inaugurated the school for local children named 'Swami Muktananda Vidya Mandir', a *dharmashālā* and a spacious dining-hall for the children. The party returned on the third day evening.

At the loving invitation of Sri Rang Avadhut Maharaj, Sri Gurudev, accom-

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panied by a few devotees, went to Avadhutji's Ashram at Nareshwar on the 6th April and stayed there for three days. The two saints met with great affection and love. Avadhutji himself showed the Ashram to the party, took them out for an excursion in a boat in the river Narmada and regaled them with rich *prasād*. Next day, a befitting reception was arranged in honour of Sri Gurudev who was presented with richly embroidered silken dress, special garlands and a sandal-wood staff with silver caps on

either end. School girls performed *Garbārāsa* singing Sanskrit songs. There was also a programme of *bhajans*. Again, Sri Gurudev was requested to distribute clothes to the local school children and others. Lastly, Sri Gurudev performed the opening ceremony of a dog's statue mounted on a pedestal and built in memory of a dog Buchiya who had served Avadhutji in many ways. The dog was not only very intelligent and faithful but possessed some intuitive qualities.



FOR NEW VISITORS

As shown in the map the nearest big towns, from Ganeshpuri, are Bassein, Virar, Bhiwandi and Thana. The small town of Ganeshpuri is equipped with nearly all the modern facilities like electricity, telephone, water-supply, small hotels, restaurants, lodging and boarding houses, sanatoria, *dharma-shalas*, grain and provision shops, florists, laundry, dispensary etc. Private bungalows are also available on daily or monthly rent. There is also a holiday camp run by Government.

Shree Gurudev Ashram is situated between the Vajreshwari Temple and the main town of Ganeshpuri which is only four furlongs further away from the Ashram.

Discipline of the Ashram :

Really speaking there are no hard and fast rules of the Ashram. It is open to all the seekers and the devotees irrespective of caste or religion. With Gurudev's permission any one can stay in the Ashram and there are no charges. If somebody asks Sri Gurudev about the charges, he always replies that the observance of discipline of the Ashram is the only charge one would have to pay. And the discipline is :

1. Observe silence.
2. Talk less and soft when you must.
3. Spend more time on meditation.
4. Keep your room neat and tidy.
5. Keep your things intact.
6. Do not expect others to attend to your needs.
7. Use water sparingly.
8. Do not spread wet clothes on the window panes or inside the room. A separate place is provided for them.

9. Keep the Ashram belongings in their proper places after use.
10. Tobacco in any form is prohibited.
11. No loose talks are allowed.
12. Do not treat this sacred place as a club.

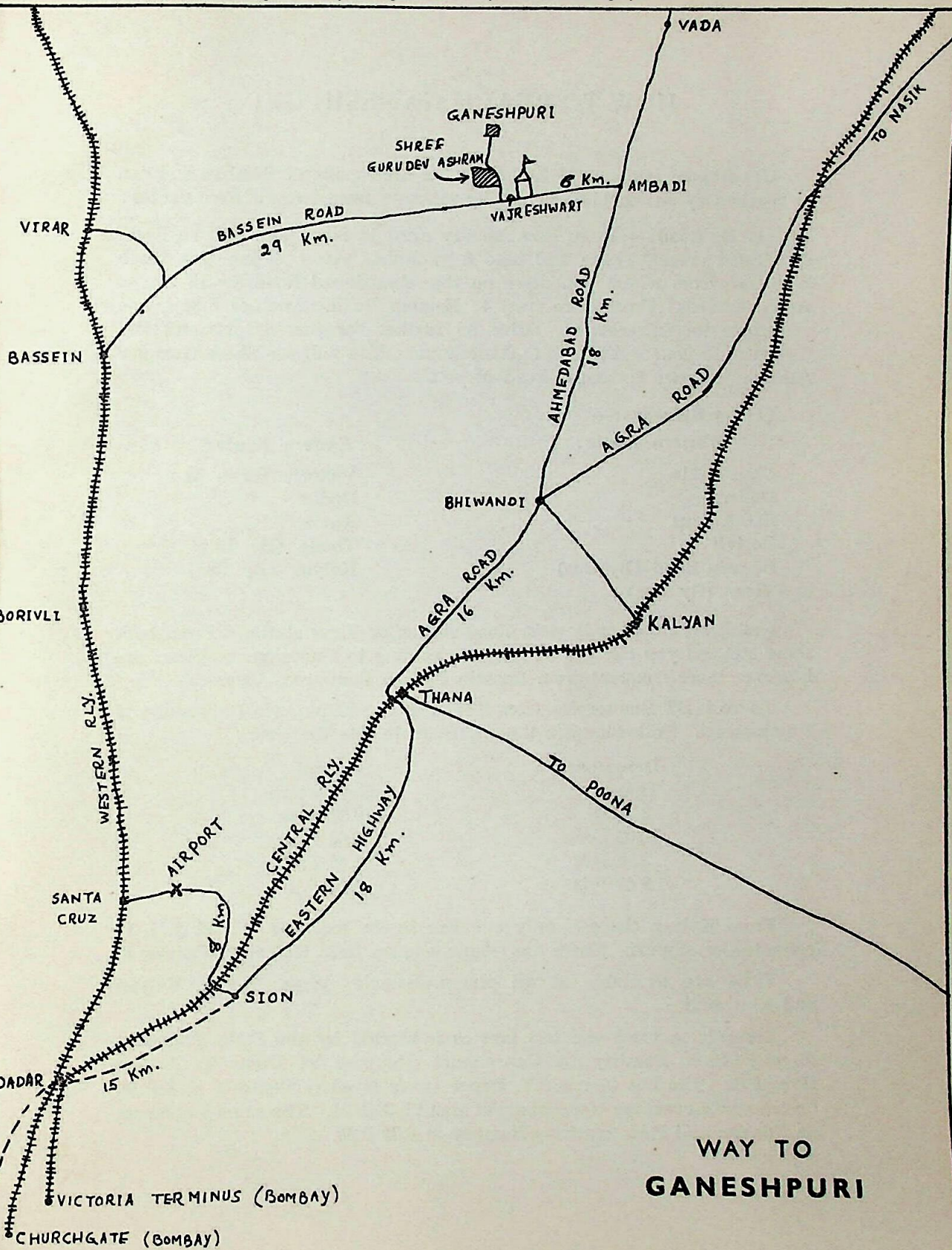
Daily Routine :

Except the normal activities of the day the rest of the programme consists of whatever comes up spontaneously. The most important feature is that the Ashram provides an excellent opportunity to the visiting *sadhakas* to become introspective and benefit from the spiritual vibrations of the place, receiving them in silence.

There are no fixed hours and topics for Sri Gurudev's discourses. Usually, whenever a seeker puts him a question he replies at length. *Satsang* consists of such informal talks which one may find even more inspiring, illuminating and interesting than formal lectures.

The normal daily activity of the Ashram is as follows :

- 4.00 a.m. Day begins with the ringing of the bell.
- 4.30 a.m. Tape-recorded Gita recitation.
- 5.30 a.m. Arati.
- 6.30 a.m. Yoga-asanas by Ashram boys.
- 7.00 a.m. Samadhi darshan.
- 7.30 a.m. Sri Gurudev's darshan.
- 8.00 a.m. Silence and meditation.
- 10.00 a.m. Satsang.
- 12.00 noon. Lunch.
- 12.30 p.m. Rest.
- 3.00 p.m. Satsang.
- 5.30 p.m. Silence and meditation.
- 7.00 p.m. Arati.
- 8.00 p.m. Supper.
- 8.30 p.m. Retiring for the night.



HOW TO REACH GANESHPURI

Ganeshpuri is about 75 km. from the Metropolis of Bombay and can be reached by automobiles as also by railways from two different routes :

(1) **By Road:—** From Bombay city come to Sion, take Eastern Highway Road ; reach Thana and take Agra Road. After 16 km. you reach Bhiwandi from where you drive on the Ahmedabad Road for 18 km. to reach Ambadi. From here turn to Bassein Road. Another 6 km. and you come to Vajreshwari. Drive on further for just a kilometre and then turn to your right to go to Ganeshpuri. You will see Shree Gurudev Ashram just two furlongs ahead of you.

(2) **By Railways:—**

Western Route :

Churchgate
Dadar
Santa Cruz
Borivli
Bassein Road (By Bus)
Virar (By Bus)

Eastern Route :

Victoria Terminus
Dadar
Kurla
Thana (By Bus)
Kalyan (By Bus)

Get down either at Bassein Road station or Virar station. From both these stations you can get ST Bus for coming to Ganeshpuri. Buses are however more frequent from Bassein Station than from Virar.

There is ST Bus service from Thana to Ganeshpuri via Bhiwandi and Vajreshwari. Following are the approximate Bus timings :

<i>Departure</i>	<i>Arrival</i>
Thana	Ganeshpuri
8 A.M.	10.30 A.M.
12.05 noon	2.00 P.M.
3.30 P.M.	5.40 P.M.
5.40 P.M.	8.00 P.M.

From Kalyan there is only one Bus in the morning at 7.30 A.M. to come to Ganeshpuri. There are frequent buses from Kalyan to Bhiwandi.

Taxis are available at all places—Bassein, Virar, Thana, Kalyan and Bhiwandi.

Recently, a *week-end bus service* is started by the State Transport directly from Bombay to Ganeshpuri, stopping at Dadar T. T. and Bhiwandi. The bus leaves S.T. Depot (near Bombay Central) at 3 P.M. on *Saturday*, reaching Ganeshpuri at about 5.30 P.M. The same bus leaves on *Sunday* at 4 P.M., reaching Bombay at 6.30 P.M.

